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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["CHILD! TELL ME, IS THERE ANY ONE ELSE?" SAID DAVID DEVENISH, TENDERLY.]

## THE CURSE OF THE LESTERS.

### CHAPTER V.

VANA TEMPEST had thought as she walked home, after posting her last adieu to Basil Lester, that fate had surely wreaked its worst upon her. There really seemed no other arrow in its quiver which had power to wound her; but before a few days had passed she was fain to confess her mistake.

The Cliffords were—as has been stated—distantly related to Mrs. Tempest, and moved in a far better sphere than the vicar's wife. Indeed, the childless pair ranked quite as county people, and having a large fortune, and no very near ties, were much looked up to by such off-lying connections who thought they stood a chance in the dim future of a legacy; so when Mrs. Tempest received a letter from Whitby, saying that her cousin's great friend, Mr. Devenish would shortly be passing through Vale Lester and had specially desired an introduction to the Vicar, the hospitable soul of Mrs. Hepzibah was

moved to make great preparation in his honour. She wrote and begged Mr. Devenish would spend a week with them, and when this was declined, worried herself and Vana by the hour with vain speculations as to what could possibly have brought him to Norfolk, and why he should choose to break his journey at such a sleepy, uninteresting place as Vale Lester.

Vana listened as in duty bound, and answered her aunt to the best of her ability. Mr. Devenish was five or six-and-thirty she thought. He never seemed to do anything for a living, so she supposed he had enough to keep him. His house was three miles out of Whitby, and he had the loveliest grounds she had ever seen, much prettier than those of Lester Court.

Pressed to say whether he had read a volume of Mr. Tempest's sermons (printed for private circulation) and been seized with an intense admiration for their author, Vana was obliged to confess Mr. Devenish had no taste for sermons, and infinitely preferred tennis, so that poor Mrs. Tempest found much of her curiosity unsatisfied, and

looked forward to her guest's arrival with mingled anxiety and pride.

He came in quite unexpectedly one evening, having arrived by the afternoon train, and taken up his quarters at the Spread Eagle. He walked into the drawing-room as naturally as though he had known them all his life, and in ten minutes had won Mrs. Tempest's heart for ever by taking notice of the children, while the shade of deference in his manner to the Vicar convinced that worthy he was a man of great discernment.

For the rest, David Devenish was a fine specimen of a young Englishman, strong and broad shouldered, with the healthy colour and bronzed skin that come from exposure to the open air, the cultivated voice and polished manners which result from gentle birth and good society.

He was a guest to be proud of. Sir George Lester himself could not boast of more finished courtesy. He talked on all kinds of subjects with ease, and made himself thoroughly at home; but when he rose to go a little before ten poor Mrs. Tempest was still utterly in the dark as to the real object of his coming.

The Vicar, who had accompanied him to the gate was a little surprised by the inquiry: "Could I see you alone for a few minutes to-morrow? What time would suit you best?"

Quite impressed by the honour, Mr. Tempest declared he should be at liberty the whole morning; any hour he should be delighted to devote to his guest.

David Devenish smiled.

"I doubt if it will take ten minutes," he said, simply. "There is something I want to ask you for, sir, and I should like a few words of quiet conversation first. I will look in at ten o'clock."

The Vicar told his wife he should be engaged most particularly with Mr. Devenish after breakfast, and that they were not to be interrupted on any pretext whatever. Mrs. Tempest assented readily. It was coming to the point, and as secrets filtered from her husband's brain to hers about as rapidly as water passes through a sieve, the chances were she would very soon know all she wished.

And though Mr. Devenish's coming and his important errand were discussed at the breakfast table in full family council, it never entered into anyone's head to guess what he wanted.

Punctually to the moment the visitor appeared, and was ushered by the housemaid into the study, and then all the stranger's ease and confidence seemed to desert him.

He looked as anxious and perturbed as though he cherished a real fear of the easy-going vicar.

"I had hoped, sir, you might guess the object of my coming," he began a little nervously.

Now, except the sermons—which he was too modest to suggest—the vicar had no idea whatever on the subject, so he smiled, and said placidly,—

"I assure you, Mr. Devenish, I am too pleased to make your acquaintance to ask particularly to what I owe the honour. Any friend of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford would be welcome here."

Mr. Devenish flinched a little uncomfortably, then brought his fist down on the table, and plunged at once into his business.

"I am a plain-spoken man, Mr. Tempest, and I don't know how to unburden my errand gradually. In simple English, I have come here to ask you for your niece!"

The vicar stared in utter astonishment. His genuine amazement rather annoyed Devenish, who went on in a nettled tone,—

"I fail to see anything surprising in my request. I am aware I am somewhat Miss Tempest's senior, but there have been happy marriages before now with seventeen years between husband and wife."

"And you actually want to marry Vana?" "I have just told you so. I confess I cannot understand your incredulity."

The poor vicar rubbed his forehead reflectively, and wished that Hephzibah had had the burden of this interview instead of him.

He knew that his strong-minded helpmate would make nothing of the scruple which pressed so heavily on himself.

It was a splendid prospect for Vana, and Vana was certainly one too many at the vicarage, but the vicar was a gentleman, and, albeit, somewhat given to self-interest; and, seeking he could not deliberately, deceive anyone who came to him in such a frank, outspoken manner as Mr. Devenish,—

"I am very sorry," he began, lamely, "very sorry, but Vana is no fit wife for you, Mr. Devenish."

David Devenish stared. "I think I could make her happy," he persisted. "Of course, I am a great rough fellow for a little fairy like her, but I can at least give her an careful home and my heart's best love. She was brighter at Whitby than she looks now, Mr. Tempest. I assure you it gave me quite a shock to see the change these two months have made in her!"

"And the change did not alter your wishes?"

"It only made me regret I had not spoken sooner. Mr. Tempest, once again I ask you for your niece; and I swear to you that never wife shall have been more cherished or beloved than Vana if you trust her to me?"

"You don't understand," and there was a ring of pain in the vicar's voice, for he saw he should have to unlock a secret chamber of the past, and read a turned-down page in his life to this stranger. "If you knew Vana's parentage you would see for yourself she was unworthy the honour you offer her."

"She is your niece. Whatever your brother's faults, they cannot affect her grace and beauty. I should marry Vana as your niece, not as her father's daughter."

"I never had a brother," said the vicar, blurring out the fact rather gruffly, because it was so painful to him. "I had but one sister, the very apple of my eye, and Vana is her child. Now do you understand?"

Mr. Devenish looked very grave.

"Does she know it?"

"She has not a suspicion of it. A year ago my sister wrote that she was dying, and longed to see me once again. I set out at once, but I got there too late to find her alive. I could only bring Vana home, and try to treat her as one of our children."

The very tone of his voice told how he had failed.

"There was no scandal," he went on a little pompously. "Nearly twenty years ago, when I was in a London curacy, I married. My wife and Dorothea did not quite hit it off, and my sister decided to be a governess. I found her a desirable situation, and she went to it. The first holidays she spent with us. When it came round to the second, we wrote and invited her again. That letter came back to us with a few lines from Dorothea's employer saying that she had left her two months before."

"And did you not try to find her?"

"Hardly. I had my wife to think of. I knew whatever I moved Dorothea could find me out by looking in a clergy list."

"You have no proof she was not married?" said David Devenish, keeping back the reproaches which rose to his lips, only by a supreme effort.

"I have every proof. She wrote to me three years afterwards saying she was worse than a widow, and begging me to receive her and her little child. My wife answered that letter, saying our home was open to her as soon as we had read her marriage lines!"

"What a heartless letter!"

"No. Hephzibah is a good woman, but she and Dorothea never pulled well together. My wife has amply redeemed any past harshness by her kindness to the child. We have treated Vana with the utmost patience. She is far too like her mother to care for our quiet home. I always fancy myself her father must have been of higher rank, for the child has strange notions considering her upbringing. It has been a painful task to me to tell you all this, Mr. Devenish, but I felt it to be my duty. You will see now why, honoured and proud as I should have felt at a connection with yourself, I could not entertain your proposals for Vana."

"And my answer is to repeat them," said David Devenish, firmly. "Do you think I would let Vana suffer for anything that happened before she was born? I must love her more, not less, for her misfortunes, poor child! I am a rich man, and can afford to please myself. I have no near relations to be critical of my choice. As my wife, Vana will be safe from every slight that could come to her, and no living creature will ever suspect the story of her birth."

Mr. Tempest stared at the speaker. The innate nobility of the man impressed him. His own was not a strong character, but he could at least appreciate generosity in others. He put out his hand and shook David's heartily.

"Vana is a lucky girl," he said, warmly. "And now, shall I send her to hear her good fortune?"

The words grated on Mr. Devenish.

"You are forgetting one thing, sir," he said, gravely. "You quite forget that Vana may refuse me. I want no unwilling bride. I love Vana as my own soul, but I will never marry her unless she gives me love for love."

"You would like to see her?" persisted Mr. Tempest, who felt that his niece's lot at the vicarage was not so particularly happy as to make her anxious to remain there.

"Where is she?" asked the lover. "Ha!" as his eyes caught sight of the little figure entering the vicarage garden, "she is just coming in. With your permission I will join her."

He did not wait for the permission. He went out through the French window and met Vana on the threshold.

"I want you to take another turn with me, Miss Tempest, if it is not too cold for you," he said, gently. "No," as Vana began to excuse herself, "your aunt will not want you."

They turned into the churchyard, and for a little while no one spoke; then Mr. Devenish asked suddenly,—

"What has changed you so, Vana? Do you know you are only the shadow of the bright little girl I knew in Yorkshire?"

"I feel so tired," said Vana, sadly, "and somehow, Mr. Devenish, I don't think Vale Lester is a cheerful place. I am so weary of it."

"And I want you to leave it."

The deed was done. The plunge was made. In a few moments he had poured out his story and offered her a love as faithful and devoted as women could deserve.

Vana listened like a creature in a dream.

"I am so sorry," she said at last, "so very, very sorry. Mr. Devenish, I think I like you better than anyone I know, but I can never be your wife."

"Why not?"

"I cannot love you."

He had told her uncle he would not take her to himself unless she gave him love for love, but looking into Vana's beautiful face his resolution wavered. She was so dear to him he would fain have had her by his side and sheltered her from all life's rough blasts. Besides, if he left her at the vicarage, what would her life be like? Would her relations ever forgive her for refusing a man with five thousand a year?

"Vana!" he pleaded, fondly, "look up and speak to me, tell me why you send me away; do you fear I should not be patient with you, my darling? I love you so well that I would wait gladly until you could tell me your heart was mine!"

She looked up at him with her beautiful eyes, those eyes Basil had used to compare to violet, velvety heart's ease.

"I like you very much, and I could trust you better than anyone in the world—but I never mean to marry!"

"Why not?"

But Vana had no mind to tell him, and seeing that, he altered the form of his question.

"Child, tell me, is there anyone else?"

"Not now!"

The words were so faint, they hardly reached his ear. David took the little hand and held it tenderly in both his own.

"My darling, for both our sakes be frank and answer me, is he dead? Is it a mere passing quarrel, or is it a gulf between you no time can bridge over?"

"He is going to marry someone else," said Vana, quietly; "and I—I pity her more than myself. She loves him just as I did, and she has money, so he will be true to her. I have only one wish now, never to see his face again!"

"Then, Vana, come to me! My darling you shall be shielded from every rough blast, you shall have your own way in all things; so only you will be my wife!"



And yet she hesitated; with the dull wearing pain for Basil's perfidy yet at her heart she could not reason well, but something within her whispered she would be yet more miserable if she, of her own doing, made the old love a sin. She thought her love for Basil was cold and dead, and yet she could not bear to promise the truth he had alighted to someone else.

And she was so lonely, she felt like a rudderless boat on a wide sea, or as a fragile ivy that has no prop about which to climb. Then David Devenish was so kind and true, he would be so gentle with her; very little of kindness had come to this child, and so it hurt her strangely to send this friend away.

And yet could she do it? Could she bring herself to take all and give nothing. The tears stood in her large eyes; and then rolled slowly down her cheeks.

"I have been too sudden with you!" cried Mr. Devenish, penitently. "Of course I have taken you by surprise. Vana, if I come again six weeks hence will you promise me to try and think favourably of my wishes?"

She promised him.

David had another interview with the Vicar, at which Aunt Hepzibah assisted.

It was then arranged that Mr. Devenish should spend his Christmas at Vale Lester Vicarage, unless he heard from Vana, begging him not to come. Her tacitly suffering him to return was to be the intimation she agreed to be his wife.

Mrs. Tempest made up her mind the note of refusal should not be sent. She had six weeks before her, and if in that time she did not make Vana hear reason, why, her name was not Hepzibah.

One result of Vana's engagement (as her relations persisted in calling it) was that she was immediately released from her teaching.

Aunt Hepzibah felt they owed so much to Mr. Devenish. She therefore called on Lady Lester, and after unfolding Vana's brilliant prospects, begged she might be excused from giving any further instructions to the lesser Lesters.

My lady, who, when money was not at stake, could do a gracious thing, agreed at once, and warmly congratulated Mrs. Tempest on her niece's success.

"Five thousand a year! Why, my Alice married on two hundred, and not one of my children have more than four. Vana has played her cards well, not but that she's a pretty little creature; and I would have made more of her, only I was afraid of Basil!"

Mrs. Tempest could afford to be magnanimous since Vana's future husband possessed a rent roll more than double Sir George's income from all sources.

"It is a match after our own heart," she admitted; "and I shall be delighted to see the wedding fairly over. Vana has looked terribly delicate lately. I have been half thinking of letting Dr. Slowman look at her!"

Lady Lester was quite an authority on sanitary matters; for twenty years she and her husband had studied little else, so she was quite in her element, and discussed Vana's symptoms with great interest, little suspecting her own son had more to do with the girl's white cheeks than either autumn fogs or general debility.

"I would certainly let Slowman look at her" was her advice. "She has looked very white for some time, and a tonic would do her no harm. Sir George and I have both the highest confidence in Slowman."

The old family doctor, who asserted Simon Lester's sanity when he made his extraordinary will, had been desired to seek change of air for his wife's delicate chest, and was spending the winter at Nice, while his patients were looked after by one Andrew Slowman, whose urbane manners and silken voice made him a general favourite with the fairer sex.

"How is Sir George?" asked Mrs. Tempest.

"I did not see him at church on Sunday."

Lady Lester sighed. A good woman in the main, and really attached to her husband,

there was little doubt she had suffered a slow martyrdom these twenty years on account of his health.

To outlive all his family was Sir George's one object. To the outer world he always pronounced himself quite well, but to the wife of his bosom he confessed every adverse symptom, and there were days when she had but a sorry time of it.

"I am very anxious about him," she said, slowly; "I know you are not a gossip, Mrs. Tempest, and will not betray my confidences. There is a change in Sir George I can't make out."

Much honoured by the trust reposed in her, and with genuine womanly pity for Lady Lester, the Vicar's wife begged for more details.

Lady Lester looked anxiously round the room almost as though she feared the walls had ears.

"He seems so strange. He has no appetite at all, and is so feverish. Then his temper varies. Sometimes he is intensely irritable, at others almost too placid, and even takes no notice of anything, but just sits and dozes by the fire. I don't think," said the poor wife, tearfully, "he can be well. He never used to sleep at all in the daytime."

"And does he still take exercise?"

"Never goes outside the door. I feel almost tempted to send for Basil; and yet it would blight all his prospects to recall him suddenly; besides, Sir George is dead against it, he declares he is perfectly well."

"And Dr. Slowman?"

"Dr. Slowman says the change is the natural result of old age. I have every confidence in him," protested Lady Lester, who, in convincing Mrs. Tempest, was evidently trying also to convince herself; "but still you see he is rather young, and, of course, he cannot know my husband's constitution like old Dr. Stone, who has attended George for forty years."

Mrs. Tempest looked thoughtful.

"I think, my lady, I would write to him!"

"To whom?"

"Dr. Stone. It seems to me if he knew all the new symptoms you mention he would be able to understand the case far better than Dr. Slowman."

"But if I offend Dr. Slowman, what is to become of us?" enquired Lady Lester.

"He is only a stopgap. Of course, if he doesn't satisfy the patients Dr. Stone must find some one else; then you know there are plenty of doctors at Dorsetham who would drive over on an emergency. Considering all there is at stake I should certainly write to Dr. Stone, and I hope you'll forgive my suggesting it."

Lady Lester was not in the least offended; she wrote that very night, and—unprecedented thing for her to do—walked down to the village directly after breakfast the next day, and posted the letter with her own hands.

It was a very simple and detailed account of Sir George's symptoms, and without saying a word the substitute could resent, suggested that Dr. Stone's greater experience might suggest remedies that had not occurred to his temporary assistant.

## CHAPTER VI.

LADY LESTER felt a weight off her mind when she had posted her letter, and she came back to the Court with quite a cheerful face. Things had tried her a good deal of late. She missed her boy more than she could have believed; Freda (the elder of her married daughters) was very ill and pining for her mother, while Sir George would not hear of being left; and to complete matters the staid, middle-aged woman, who had been Lady Lester's own maid ever since she started such a luxury, had knocked up and gone for some weeks' holiday.

The person engaged in her place, though

with excellent testimonials and expert at every duty, yet failed to please her mistress.

Lady Lester had a kind of undefined fear of "Sharpe"; she could find no fault with her, she did double the work of the absent maid, never complained however much was exacted from her, seemed to take a positive pleasure in inventing new tasks for herself, from dressing Miss Sybil's doll to cutting out new fashions for Miss Lester.

The woman was a perfect treasure, everyone, from Sir George to the servants praised her, and Lady Lester in vain accused herself of prejudice and folly; but still remained unable to conquer the strange shrinking she had conceived from the first for her new servant.

Perhaps Sharpe's personal appearance had originally started her lady's dislike. The woman had one of those young old faces which do puzzle some of us.

Her hair was white as snow, but the dark eyes were full of fire and expression. The face was pale and lined with wrinkles, her figure clumsy and awkward, but no girl could have been more active; her age was stated by her reference as thirty-five.

Lady Lester owned she could not have guessed it in the least, for to her mind Sharpe looked anything from twenty to fifty.

This fanciful story stood ready in Lady Lester's dressing-room to relieve her mistress. The latter half expected some remark on her indulging in such a strange freak as a solitary walk, but Sharpe knew her place far too well to presume. She waited on her lady assiduously, and only when her duties were finished ventured on a remark.

"I beg your pardon, my lady, but I don't think the master seems so well to-day. He rang his bell soon after you went out, and I took him to his medicine, but I don't like his looks at all."

"What is wrong, Sharpe?" and the ever-present fear shone in the poor wife's eyes.

"Well, as to that, my lady, I shouldn't like to say," said Sharpe, meditatively, as she twisted the hem of her white apron, "but I'm sure there's a change, and I thought maybe you'd like to send for Dr. Slowman."

"I expect him every minute," replied Lady Lester. "He told me yesterday he should be early this morning."

She went into the library, the room Sir George best loved. He lay on a sofa near the fire.

Full often during the last twenty years had she been called on to see him in ill-health, for the baronet, like many people who think of nothing but themselves, had his full share of little ailments; but never in her life had she seen his face like this. There was a grey, worn look about him.

His breath went and came in spasmodic gasps, and the eyes raised to meet hers had a strange yearning expression, as though the poor old man could not quite tell what passed around him.

"Where's Fenella?" he muttered, peevishly. "I want her, why does she never come near me?"

"You forget, dear," said Lady Lester, soothingly, "your sister has taken Fenella to Devonshire for the winter; they have been gone over a week."

"I want her! I want her!"

This preference for a stranger vexed Lady Lester, in spite of her patient forbearance.

"Our own girls are here," she said, cheerfully, "any one of them would be glad to sit with you, George."

He shook his head.

"I want Fenella."

"What do you want her for? Shall I write?"

"No," a flash of his old intelligence seemed to return. "I won't let Deborah know I am ill, she might triumph over me. I only want to see Fenella, that I may know it's a fancy."

"What is a fancy, George?"

"What I see. Whenever you leave me, Mary, I see Fenella's face bending over me. She positively gloats over my suffering. I

know she does. I want to see Fenella and touch her that I may be sure this mocking creature is not my boy's sweetheart."

Troubled beyond measure, his wife sat down by him and took his hand in hers.

"Indeed it is only fancy, George, Fenella loves you dearly. It is terrible to fancy the girl Basil loves should plot against his father's life. Dear, believe me it is only fancy."

Sir George shook his head.

"I wish Basil was not going to marry her. We know nothing of her birth remember, and—trouble will come from her."

Dr. Slowman's entrance was a positive relief. Lady Lester had said the day before she could not think him so clever as Dr. Stone, but yet the smooth tones of his sonorous voice comforted her, his fat rubicund face was so serene in its expression that she took heart, and began to hope Sir George was not dangerously ill after all.

"Dangerously ill," exclaimed Dr. Slowman when she followed him into the hall to ask—"of course not; our dear patient is a little languid, and out of sorts, not much appetite, no great desire for exertion, but then you know Sir George is over seventy."

"Seventy-five."

"And I need not remind you that he has taken an infinity of remedies; it is the penalty all those must pay, who swallow medicine needlessly, when the time comes that they really require it, it has lost its power."

"Then you don't see any need for further advice, or you—"

He interrupted her.

"I cannot prevent your calling in a second doctor, Lady Lester, but in that case I shall beg to resign my attendance on Sir George. I am no neophyte, and I could not let it be supposed I was unable to cope with a simple case of low fever."

"And is it really low fever?"

"Low fever pure and simple, aggravated, I may say, by a great extent of irritability." So poor Lady Lester was "put down" by Dr. Slowman, and tried for the rest of the day to believe she was nervous and over-anxious; but all the same she was glad to remember the letter now on its way to Dr. Stone; her husband had quarrelled with him a dozen times, but he had never failed the Leesters in a case of real trouble, and the distracted wife felt certain he would write and allay her fears by return of post. Sir George seemed better as the day wore on, he even took the head of his own table and carved for his family at the late dinner, but he had to retire directly the meal was over, and in five minutes was in a drowsy slumber from which there was no arousing him.

"Mamma, do send for Basil," pleaded one of the girls, at last perceiving her mother's anxiety, "you are only knocking yourself up."

But the next day there was a change for the better, that was always the way with Sir George's illness; as soon as it took a bad turn and really alarmed his family, before they could act on their fears, the symptoms changed, and he seemed on the road to convalescence, and so the time wore on between hopes and fears till the fifth day after Lady Lester had posted her letter.

"I thought I should have heard from Dr. Stone this morning," she said, a little dejectedly to her daughter Blanche. "It is strange he does not write."

"You may get a letter by to-night's post," returned Blanche, cheerfully. "Mamma, could you spare Sharpe to go over to Dereham? she says, she is almost mad with toothache, and wants to see a dentist."

"Let her go, by all means," answered Lady Lester. "She will not be wanted, for I shall stay with your father all day."

The young ladies entrusted Sharpe with a great many commissions, and the carriage conveyed her to the little village station, where she would take the train for Dereham.

The Misses Lester missed her services very

much, but their mother felt a strange relief that the house was free of her.

It was getting dusk when a fly rattled up the avenue, and, to the butler's amazement, Dr. Stone alighted from it.

Pushing the bewildered servant aside, the old doctor simply asked the question,—

"Where is your master?"

"In the library, sir."

The old man tossed off his hat and coat—they heard later he had been travelling night and day ever since he got Lady Lester's letter—and then, concealing all appearance of haste or show of surprise, he walked into the library as naturally as though he had never left Vale Lester, but had been in the habit of visiting Sir George every day.

The baronet lay with closed eyes, his wife near him.

Dr. Stone put his finger on his lips to enjoin her silence, and then said in a low tone,—

"I did not like your account of Sir George, Lady Lester, and so I thought I would come and see how you were getting on for myself. How long has he been like this?"

"He has had these symptoms for weeks, but he never seemed quite so ill as to-day. Dr. Slowman gets angry if I speak of a second opinion, and declares it is only low fever."

"Heaven forgive him for the lie!" muttered Dr. Stone, "and pardon me for leaving my patients in his hands. Why, I thought him an able physician. He must be an idiot!"

"Then is it not low fever?"

"No."

"What then?"

He did not answer her.

He bent over Sir George, and, lifting his eyelids, looked long and anxiously at the pupils. Then, with a heavy sigh, he turned to Lady Lester, and asked for writing materials.

"You must send off this telegram by the swiftest horse in your stable." Then, seeing her look of agony, "My poor friend, can't you trust me? I am sending for Jebb from Dereham, and telling him what remedies to bring with him. Heaven only grant it is not too late!"

Lady Lester's heart stood almost still. She had not lived all her married life in Norfolk without knowing Dr. Jebb was the supreme medical authority of the county.

"Keep up your courage," said Dr. Stone, kindly; "we will save him yet—if only it is not too late. You had better let him be got to bed at once."

They laid him in his own room. He neither spoke nor moved. He seemed as though lost in a deep stupor, and his wife's heart ached as she looked at him.

"Should we not send for Basil?"

"Wait till Jebb has seen him. Lady Lester, I know you would not let anyone but yourself act as Sir George's head nurse, but tell me who has assisted you?"

"He could never bear the girls about him," answered Lady Lester, "so I have done most of the nursing myself. Latterly my maid has waited on him a little. He took a great fancy to her."

"What, Robinson?"

"Oh, no; Robinson was away. This was a stranger—a very superior kind of woman, and wonderfully energetic."

Dr. Stone bit his lip.

"Who recommended her to you?"

"She answered my advertisement. Lady Tollemason was one of her references. I did not like the woman, but I must confess she served me faithfully. She is only absent now because I gave her leave to go over to Dereham and have her tooth out."

It struck Dr. Stone there was a very good dentist at Vale Lester, and also that an eight miles journey on a November day was hardly advisable for anyone suffering from toothache, but he said nothing.

If things were as he feared, poor Lady

Lester must hear one or two bitter truths, but he would fain spare her as long as possible.

In about an hour Sir George opened his eyes, and looked slowly round the room.

"Why, Stone, I thought you were at Nice!"

"I chance to have come home," said the doctor, cheerfully; "and, of course, I look up my old friends first. Don't go to sleep, Sir George, I have a hundred things to say to you."

But it was in vain; the baronet's eyes had closed.

The stupor was again creeping over him, and evidently he had no strength to resist it.

It seemed to the poor wife and Dr. Stone that they waited days instead of hours before a little stir below announced the arrival of Dr. Jebb.

He always said afterwards, he had to blurt it out, that he could not see the yearning, pleading in Lady Lester's eyes and keep silence.

She turned to him with an imploring prayer to save her husband, and he answered her with almost cruel plainness,—

"My dear lady, no mortal could. He is past our skill—Sir George is sinking fast."

"Dying!" exclaimed Lady Lester, "dying! but what of—not low fever?"

"No," returned Dr. Stone, with a shrewd glance at his colleague, "of slow poison. My old friend has been cruelly done to death in his own home! His murderer must have been one of his own household!"

An hour later the great bell of Vale Lester church tolled for the death of the master of the Court, and Vana's sometime lover was Sir Basil, and head of his family.

(To be continued.)

## WHEN SHALL WE TWO MEET AGAIN?

—30—

### CHAPTER XXII.

"I KNOW WHO YOU ARE!"

"RALPH! Ralph!" murmured Cyrilla, in a voice half-stifled with agonised sobs, and the girl by her side heard the words, and in the midst of her distracted grief they came as a sudden revelation. Lord Wildgrave gave one quick look at Colonel Gordon, but at that moment Dr. Adams pushed his way through the crowd, and all interest was centred in his verdict.

"Come away," said the Viscount, gently touching Lady Dacre on the shoulder. He knew her story and was filled with unutterable compassion now that he knew who Treherne really was; but all he could do was to put her under Hilda's care, and send them to a little distance, where they stood tremblingly side by side.

Dr. Adams made everyone stand aside, except himself and Colonel Gordon, in order that the patient might have as much air as possible.

Brandy was fetched from the Tower, but he refused to give it till the powers of respiration were restored, as he said it would choke him. Then with Gordon's assistance he moved the limp arms up and down, and bent the upper part of the body forward.

All were watching in breathless suspense. The woman with the blue handkerchief over her head was hanging on to the arm of her Bill; but she wouldn't take him home till she knew how it was with the manager. And all the other rescued miners were there, though they felt "a bit queer."

It was a curious scene. On the outskirts of the crowd stood a smart carriage and pair, next to that a dog cart and a gig, under the trees a group of thoroughbreds, watched over by one or two dapper grooms. Nearer to the point of interest were the ladies—Lady Dacre, Miss Hilda, and Mrs. Gifford who had come



over with Sir Thomas in the carriage; and half-hidden under the dark shadow of the pines, a little nearer to that prostrate figure in the centre over which the doctor and the Colonel were bending.—Captain Gifford was standing, his soldierly figure as upright as the pines behind him, and next to him was the fragile, dandified Earl with an unusually serious expression on his refined face.

In striking contrast, on the other side at the foot of the hill, stood the miners with their stalwart frames, rugged faces, rough hair and soiled shirts. They looked as if life were a serious matter to them, but as if they would make a hard fight for it under any circumstances.

There were a good many women here and there with children in their arms or clinging to their skirts, and some had picturesque gipsy faces, with passionate eyes that were full of sorrow and sympathy now. Many of the men had lighted torches, which cast a lurid glare in the midst of the deep shadows.

The fragments of silver-lead scattered on the hill-side glittered like diamonds sprinkled among the tufts of heather and gorse, whilst the mouth of the adit, gloomy and cavernous, seemed like the entrance to Hades, and Lady Dacre's golden head, from which the hat had fallen unheeded, looked like a sunbeam gone astray under the pines.

Over all sailed the moon in her sweet serenity, turning the sea into a sheet of silver, and giving a touch of ethereal beauty to the Lonely Tower with its lowered flag, as it seemed to hover between earth and sky; whilst the pine trees with dark foliage looked like funeral plumes.

Not a sound was to be heard but the gentle play of the waves on the beach, or the sweet, soft notes of the missel thrush singing a lullaby to the dying day, for every heart was throbbing with one hope, every tongue tied by the same agony of suspense.

"Now, brandy, quick," said the Doctor, in sharp decisive tones.

It was handed to him at once, whilst a flutter of hope went from heart to heart.

Hilda pressed Cyrilla's hand, and glanced up into her face, not daring to speak, yet looking the hope that she felt. And in another minute Treherne was rising to his feet, supported by the Doctor and Gordon. Then a shout burst forth which echoed from hill to hill. And every tongue seemed loosed, and the Newfoundland, which had broken his chain, came bounding as if half mad round his master, his joyous bark mingling with the sonorous cheers of the miners, and some laughed and others cried. And Kitty rushed up to Treherne, as he looked round in half bewilderment, whilst Cyrilla and Hilda stood quietly in the shadow, blessing God for His infinite goodness.

"Is every one all right?" Ronald asked, after his hand had been nearly shaken off.

"Yes. Not a soul injured," answered Gordon, cheerily. "Take my arm, and come along home. You are a bit shaky yet."

"Wildgrave is that you? How good of you to come, and Lady Dacre, I declare, and—Miss Romer," pressing one hand after another. "Down Ponto, or you'll have me over. Where's Harewood? he must be so sorry for this."

"Oh, hang Harewood!" said Gordon, angrily. "I should like to wring his neck."

"If it was his fault I'd have the fellow up and try him for manslaughter," said Lord Wildgrave, sternly. "He deserves a lesson."

"Surely this has been punishment enough," said Treherne, with his winning smile.

And then he met Hilda's eyes fixed upon him so imploringly that he went up to her at once, though his legs shook under him as he walked.

"Let me pat you on your pony. You must be starving for want of your dinner," he said kindly, knowing that the poor little girl was so anxious to make amends for her outbreak of the night before; and yet did not know how to do it.

She put her small foot into his hand, and then flew into the saddle as light as a bird.

"Mr. Treherne," she said softly, with the tears hanging on her long lashes, "I want to say how sorry I am."

A look of vivid pleasure brightened his pale face.

"Then I haven't lost my little friend," he whispered as he kissed her hand.

"Oh, never, never!" she answered fervently, as her heart gave a bound of joy.

Lady Dacre was already mounted, when he turned slowly towards her, for Lord Davenport was only too eager to render her any little service that he was allowed to.

Ronald felt that Hilda's eager eyes would open wide, if he went off without taking any notice of her, and he was always afraid of the slightest remark as to his relations with Lady Dacre. And yet he knew of the danger of going up to her when his equilibrium was upset, and his self-control scarcely in proper working order.

The Earl was on the alert, for his jealousy of the "unknown stranger" was awake in an instant, but he did not see much to anger him. Cyrilla's voice was low and tremulous, but she only said:

"We are all so thankful to go home rejoicing," and then without waiting to shake hands, moved off, whilst Treherne stood still where she had left him, as if in a dream.

A hand was laid on his shoulder, and looking round with a start he saw Lord Wildgrave.

"I know who you are," he said in a low voice. "Remember that I will stand by you through thick and thin. Good-night." In a louder tone, "I prescribe bed for you, and dinner for myself. Come, Gifford, I see Davenport and all the rest have given us the slip, and by Jove, I'm awfully hungry. Gordon, you are coming back with us—are not you?"

"I must ask you to excuse me," said the Colonel, shaking his head. "I should feel as if this fellow would be getting into mischief again if I weren't here to keep him out of it."

The carriages and horses all disappeared, and the miners dispersed to their homes, so the two friends walked to the Tower arm-in-arm and undisturbed.

Presently Ronald discovered a man who seemed to be skulking behind some trees, and suspecting who it was, he released his arm from Gordon's and went up to him.

"Harewood, is that you?" he asked, without a shade of displeasure in his voice, and holding out his hand as he spoke.

The tone of kindness instead of the expected rebuke fairly broke down the sub-manager's composure.

"Oh! Mr. Treherne, I thought you would never give me a chance of explaining," he said, with tears in his eyes, as he grasped his chief's hand, "but as sure as I stand here it was your writing I mistook, and it was a blot on 'south' which did all the mischief, for I took it for 'north,' and that's why I set them to work on the north adit. But if you only knew what I've suffered!"

"I'm sure you did. Good-night, and don't imagine that I'll ever bring it up against you," Treherne said, cordially.

"Do come!" called out the Colonel, in a fever of impatience. "I know what it will be?" he grumbled. "I shall have to send for Dr. Adams again as soon as he has reached home."

"You old fidget!" was the ungrateful reply, but at the same time Ronald leant heavily on his friend's arm, and could scarcely find strength to get up the last hill to his own door; and when he was inside the cack-panelled hall he sank into the first chair he came to in a dead faint.

The Colonel and Weston held a consultation over him with puzzled faces, wondering whether it were really necessary to send for the doctor; but at last decided that it would be better to leave him alone for the present.

As soon as it was practicable they would

establish him on the sofa and get him something to eat and drink.

Weston raised his master's legs and the Colonel pushed a chair under them. That was all they could do, for the bachelor establishment boasted of no remedies such as smelling salts, sal volatile, &c.

Gordon stood looking down on the handsome face of his friend with a wonderful expression of tenderness on his own.

There was no tie of blood between them, but he loved him with a deeper, truer affection than many fathers give to their sons, and as he thought of the irresistible attraction which Ronald Treherne, alias Ralph Trevanion, possessed for so many, he pitied Cyrilla Dacre from the very depths of his kindly old heart.

She had known his frank, pleasant nature, his high standard of honour, his scorn of meanness, his hatred of injustice, his fearless courage, his womanly tenderness.

She could measure him with other men and find them all wanting—her husband perhaps more than any other—and yet she had to go on her path of wifely duty, her golden head held high, and making no moan, knowing that she had only lost him through a mad mistake!

Was there any other woman on earth who would have come out of the trial so well? Surely she must have recognised him; and yet she had the wonderful strength of mind to meet him, to talk to him, to listen to the voice every tone of which must strike a chord on her aching heart, and make no sign!

Many a man might learn a lesson of courage from a high-souled woman like Lady Dacre, and yet how sweet and gentle she always was. Just the wife for Ralph Trevanion.

"Ah, poor things!" muttered the Colonel. "It's been a hard fight for both of them, but I'd lay any money either of them would rather die than give in."

"Beg pardon, sir, but supper's just ready, and you must be desperately hungry," said Weston, respectfully, from the dining-room door.

"All right, I'm coming; but I must go through a certain amount of washing first," looking down at his dusty coat and begrimed hands. "I'm in an awful state. That second explosion covered me with tons of dust, and it was a near shave altogether. Several men were in the mine at the moment, and only ran back just in time. Ah! he's coming to," he added, cheerfully, as Ronald opened his eyes.

Treherne soon rallied, and was helped on to the sofa, where he lay with a little table by his side playing with a bit of fish to please Gordon, who, on the other hand, had the appetite of a hunter.

"I tell you what," cried the Colonel, as he rose from his chair. "We'll have a bottle of cham to drink long life and happiness to the whole batch of you."

"Not too long a life," remonstrated Ronald, with a weary sigh, as he clasped his hands behind his head, and wondered if he would have minded much if it had ended that very day.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### HIS BITTEREST ENEMY!

It was nearly eleven o'clock P.M., and Treherne, utterly tired out, was just falling into a doze, when he was roused by a loud rapping at the outer door.

Weston had been sent to bed, and the Colonel had stepped out to have a serious consultation with his engineer, so Ronald was forced to recognise the necessity of getting up to answer it. He felt so wrath at being disturbed that he muttered to himself,—

"Bother the people! I wish they'd keep away," but his stern expression changed into one of blank surprise when he threw open the door and discovered a woman—who, even in the uncertain light, looked like a lady—standing on the steps.

"Is Sir Thomas Dacre here?" she asked, hurriedly, and at the first word she spoke his heart gave a bound.

"Lady Dacre! Is it possible?" he exclaimed, breathlessly.

"Oh! Mr. Treherne, is my husband here?" she asked again, and he could see that she was violently agitated.

"No, he isn't! but surely he went home hours ago with Mrs. Gifford?"

"I thought he did!" clasping her hands together; "but the coachman said he was in the dog-cart, and the groom thought he was in the carriage. Where can he be?"

Treherne looked very grave, for he feared the worst, as he remembered that Gordon had said that the second explosion so nearly caught the first people who went into the mine; but he tried to conceal his fears from the anxious wife.

"If you'll just step inside and wait," he said in as master-of-fact a tone as he could manage, "I will have a good search for him. It is just possible that he might have been shut in without anyone knowing it!"

"Shut into the mine! But surely he would be stifled!" looking up at him with frightened eyes. "Oh, be quick! be quick! I won't stay here, I'll go with you!"

"I think you had better stay!" as he caught up his hat, and took a large key off its peg.

She shook her head vehemently, and seeing that she was determined, he said no more.

It seemed to him as if it could scarcely be true that he was walking down that moonlit path with Cyrilla Dacre, after all that had happened.

He felt as if it were all a dream, even when Lord Wildgrave called out from the dog cart, and asked him if he could tell them anything about the missing man.

When Treherne replied in the negative, the Viscount threw the reins to the groom, and jumped out, and the three walked on together with hurried steps.

Neither of the two men had the smallest affection for Sir Thomas Dacre, but now that his life was supposed to be in jeopardy they would both have been willing to risk their own to save him.

As Treherne threw open the heavy door of the central adit Cyrilla shuddered at the black darkness beyond. He took down a lantern, and lit it with a match out of a shabby little match box which had seen better days.

It had once been a dainty little thing mounted in silver, and she recognised it at a glance.

If she had had the smallest doubt of his identity that little box would have helped to prove it, for she had given one just like it to Ralph Trevanion on the last day before he left England.

Now that remembrance only hung on the edge of her mind, and seemed to make no impression; but she thought of it afterwards.

"You had better sit down there," said Treherne, pulling off his coat, and throwing it over a tuft of heather.

"No, I am coming with you!"

"Then I shall close this door and refuse to go any further!" he said, resolutely.

"Treherne is quite right!" put in Lord Wildgrave; "and you will only delay matters if you insist!"

With an impatient sigh, Cyrilla sank on the bank, and the others went on immediately.

"What do you think has happened to him?" asked the Viscount, in an awe-struck voice; for this search in the lonesome darkness for a man who was probably dead, was enough to subdue the bravest spirit.

"Caught by the second explosion I'm afraid," in the same low tone. "Look here, Lord Wildgrave! I don't know if you ought to go any further!"

"May I ask why?"

"Because I can't answer for it that all this is safe," looking up at the roof above their heads.

"It's as safe for me as for you," pursuing

his way with anxious glances from side to side.

"That's nothing. You have a wife and children. I have nobody."

"You have a host of friends who wouldn't lose you for anything; but we must both go on till we find the old fellow."

They went on for some distance till,

"Here he is!" exclaimed Treherne, kneeling down by the side of something dark and indistinguishable, which might almost as well have been a hippopotamus as a man, until the full light of the lantern was brought to bear on it. "Sir Thomas! Sir Thomas! wake up and come home!" said Treherne, earnestly, using the first words that came to his tongue, and at the sound of his voice the long, inanimate form seemed to move.

Lord Wildgrave thought it was a strange sight to see the man who had the greatest cause for hating the Baronet now bending over his bitterest enemy with an expression of almost divine compassion, but it was no time for moralising.

"Where am I?" said the Baronet, slowly, in a very weak voice, as he stretched out his right hand and felt the rough, uneven floor.

"You are in Gordon's mine, and Treherne and I have come to fetch you out," said Lord Wildgrave. "Do you think you could stand?"

Sir Thomas tried to raise himself, but fell back helplessly, clutching at Treherne's arm.

"You won't leave me here?" he asked, faintly, with a piteous appeal in his usually hawk-like eyes.

"No, I'll go and get some men to help carry you."

"No, don't go! I won't be left," trying to hold him by his coat-sleeve.

"You stay and I'll go," said Lord Wildgrave, rising to his feet. "I suppose there's a gate somewhere about which we can take off its hinges?"

"Yes, the white gate by the new plantation. I'm so sorry to leave all the trouble to you."

"Nonsense! You must be pretty well done for by this time," and the Viscount walked off, but he could only go at a slow pace because of the pitch darkness.

The stillness of death settled on the adit as soon as the sound of Lord Wildgrave's footsteps died away, and the lantern lit up only a small space, beyond which there seemed to be limitless darkness on either side.

For a few minutes Sir Thomas lay perfectly still, till Treherne, who felt utterly exhausted, roused himself with a shiver to ascertain if he were alive.

Something came with a flapping of wings through the weird stillness, and he shuddered again as a loathsome bat swept in its lumbering flight close to his uncovered head.

"Are you in pain?" he asked, and his own voice sounded strange in his ears as he stooped forward to look at the Baronet's face.

It was discoloured as if by smoke, and the only sign of life was a sort of convulsive twitching in the eyelids.

It seemed as if he were very near death, and Treherne knew that this man's death would relieve him from the smallest fear of detection, and above all, would make it possible for him to love Cyrilla Dacre without the slightest shade of dishonour, and give him once again the blessed chance of winning her in all her beauty and sweetness for his own. And yet impossible and improbable as it may seem, it never occurred to him to wish for it.

Watching there by the Baronet's side he was conscious of no desire except to see him restored to health as soon as possible.

"I don't think I shall get over this," said Sir Thomas, slowly.

"Oh yes, you will, as soon as we can get you into comfortable quarters," said Ronald, encouragingly.

"The worst is," with a faint touch of his old querulousness, "I haven't got a son to come after me."

Treherne did not think it necessary to make any answer to this remark.

"I like you, Treherne; if I only could have had a son like you! Oh!" with a groan, "take the name of Dacre, and I'll make you my heir."

Treherne drew a deep breath.

"I wouldn't be your heir for the world, Good Heaven, no!" he answered, almost vehemently, as it flashed across him that this very man who was offering to make him his heir, would put him into prison without the smallest remorse, if he only guessed who he was. "Don't talk of it! don't say another word about it!" he added, uneasily, looking round anxiously to see if there were no sign of Lord Wildgrave's return.

"I'll set my wife at you," said Sir Thomas, scarcely above his breath.

"Lady Dacre would never ask me such a thing as that," frowning.

"You've no heart—no gratitude, and yet Treherne, you—and yet—" his voice died away, and his eyes closed.

Treherne felt an overpowering temptation to end it all by one stroke, and tell the Baronet that he was Ralph Trevanion.

Nothing could be so detestable as this ridiculous friendship which was always being offered him on false grounds; and surely no man, however lost to honour or generosity, would prosecute another for a heavy blow, when he had just done his best to save his life.

The fatal words were on his lips when a flash of light and the tramp of several feet showed that help was near at hand. He drew back hastily, with a sigh of regret for having lost his opportunity, and impatience at having to take up his burthen again, not recognising the fact that he had been saved by a happy chance from committing the greatest imprudence of his life.

Colonel Gordon, who came in with Lord Wildgrave, Mr. Stevens, and several men, caught sight of Treherne looking utterly worn out, and shivering in his shirt sleeves.

Immediately his first interest centred on his friend, and he said, hastily, "You get out of this; we are quite enough without you."

"Shan't I give a hand?"

"Much good it would be, in your present state," contemptuously. "Now, my men, put that thing here," pointing to the improvised litter, "lay it just by his side, and we'll get him on to it without any trouble."

Sir Thomas looked up dazzled by the light of the torches.

"What are you going to do to me?"

"Going to get you out of this hole. Now, then, all ready!" said the Colonel, shortly.

Very dexterously they lifted the Baronet, who was a very heavy man, on to the litter, and then raised it with some difficulty by six pairs of arms on to the same number of shoulders. Treherne looking back as he got near the mouth of the adit, thought that the whole scene looked like a representation of a miner's funeral on the stage, and then he stepped outside into the freshness of the sweet night air, saw Cyrilla sitting there in the moonlight, and forgot everything else.

"Are they coming?" she asked tremulously, as she stood up.

"Yes. At once. Shall we go up to the Tower to prepare Weston's mind?" he suggested, as he picked up his coat, and put it on.

"Not to the Tower?" looking up into his face with a swift glance from frightened eyes.

"It is the nearest place," he said, wearily, leaning against the frame-work of the door.

"If you would leave your husband in my charge, I'd do my best for him."

"My place would be by his bed-side," she said in a low voice, looking down on a tuft of heather at her feet.

"Then mine would be at Woodlands," he replied, with his eyes fixed on the ground.

"That would be turning you out."

"It is a rare pleasure for a stranger like me to do the smallest service for Lady Dacre," he said, with a grave bend of his silvered head, but still with averted eyes. Only once he



raised them, and drank in the beauty of her lovely face, when her whole attention seemed to be fixed on the men who were carrying her husband. When she turned her head with an anxious question, his lashes drooped at once, and he said, in a hoarse voice,—

"Shall we walk on?"

Anything was better than standing tongue-tied by her side, in the treacherous sweetness of the moonlight.

"But might I speak to him first?"

"No, no," said Colonel Gordon, hastily.

"You go on in front."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A DANGEROUS POSITION.

THE feeling that he was moving in a dream was still strong upon Treherne, when he reached the door of the Lonely Tower with Lady Dacre. There was no necessity for him to give any orders, for Colonel Gordon, directly he heard the state of the case from Lord Wildgrave, sent full directions to Weston, who bustled about and got everything ready as fast as he could.

Cyrilla sat down on a chair of carved wood, and leaned her arm on the table, her hand on her head. Her brain seemed in a whirl, and silence her only safety. Her husband was very ill, and they were now bringing him slowly up the hill, perhaps to die in Ralph Trevanion's house; but was that any reason why she should be perfectly callous to the sufferings of a man, who was only a few feet from her at that moment, and whose life that husband had ruined?

Without seeming to glance in his direction, she could tell how the joy of his youth had gone from him by the stern expression on his face, which had once been as bright as the sunshine in June, and by the pose of his head which drooped as if in utter weariness or dejection.

And yet she must not give him one word of sympathy for fear lest her forced composure should break down; she must bury her compassion as if it were an unworthy thing, and seem to be cold and heartless, when her heart was distracted with pain.

She got up from her seat, and stood in the arched doorway with one of Hilda Romer's roses brushing the softness of her cheek.

Treherne came and stood by her, watching the slow progress of the bearers of that heavy burden up the hill, and yet having room in his mind to think how he would secure that rose and place it beside one other which had been given him at the ball.

Good heavens! was it only last night—it seemed like a fortnight ago?

"Now then," said Colonel Gordon, rather breathlessly, "is the table pushed aside? for we must go straight ahead."

Treherne reproached himself for his forgetfulness, as he hurriedly pushed the table towards the side, so as to leave a free passage in the middle, and opened the door of the only bedroom on the ground floor.

It was the room usually occupied by Treherne himself, but Weston, who was an invaluable man in an emergency, had hastily moved his possessions to a bedroom on the second floor, and prepared this one for the invalid.

Sir Thomas was carried straight through, and laid upon the bed, and then came a pause, for no one knew exactly what to do.

The miners went away after having received some reward for their trouble. Mr. Stevens asked if there were anything more he could do, and being told that nothing else was wanted at the moment, went off.

Lord Wildgrave and the Colonel wiped their heated foreheads, and looked at each other inquiringly.

No one knew what sort of state Sir Thomas was in, he might be a mass of broken bones, for he had certainly groaned heavily when they moved him; he might be going to die the next moment, or be all right in a week or two.

Meanwhile, they were afraid of doing anything until the arrival of the doctor. The door of the bedroom was open, and they could see Lady Dacre stooping gracefully over her husband, whilst she bathed his forehead with some *eau-de-cologne*, which Treherne had fetched her from his dressing-table.

He was leaning against the wall with folded arms, apparently saying nothing, but looking down with compassionate eyes on the inanimate face of his enemy.

"Lady Dacre can't stay here," said Lord Wildgrave, in a cautious undertone.

"We could give the house up to her, and migrate to Woodlands," said the Colonel, his eye wandering to his pipe on the mantelshelf, which he did not like to light out of politeness to Cyrilla.

"Yes, but Treherne's not fit for that sort of thing to-night; and if they won't try to save themselves from an intolerable position, we must do it for them."

"How did you know?" said the Colonel, slowly, looking at the Viscount's grave face with wondering eyes.

"I don't know if I ought to tell you, but someone was surprised into calling him 'Ralph' to-day. Then the truth flashed across me, and I wondered that I had not guessed it before."

"Mrs. Gifford, I suppose. Do you know, Wildgrave," whilst his tones and face showed signs of deep emotion, "it was I who brought over the cursed report that she was married to him, which cost that poor girl," nodding his head towards the bedroom, "all her happiness and ruined that boy's life! I never talk of it, but I never forget it."

"But, after all, she needn't have married Sir Thomas, so you mustn't be too hard upon yourself," said the Viscount, kindly.

"It's my belief she cared for nothing on earth after that!" clenching his fist, but only bringing it down softly on the table. "Besides, she was driven into it by her father, the most selfish man that ever stepped. But, thank goodness, here's the doctor! This is better luck than I expected," and he got up from his seat after he had hastily emptied his glass.

"Sorry to hear that something has happened to Sir Thomas," began Dr. Adams as he took off his driving gloves. "How did he manage to get hurt—after it was all over? That's what puzzles me."

"We found him in the mine at just eleven to-night," explained Gordon, "and suppose he was caught by the second explosion."

"Whew! Badly hurt?" looking grave.

"We are waiting for you to tell us," said Lord Wildgrave. "But look here, Adams," lowering his voice almost to a whisper. "If you can persuade Lady Dacre that there is no necessity for her to stay here—I want to take her back with me."

"You won't get her to leave him if there's the slightest danger; but I'll do my best," and, led by the Colonel, the doctor hurried into the bedroom, and pulled the door to behind him.

Lord Wildgrave got up and stood on the step, looking out into the night.

Down below in the valley he heard his horse biting his bit, and jingling his harness at every stamp of his impatient hoofs.

No doubt the groom was just as impatient as the horse, but he had no such patent ways of showing his small powers of endurance, and had probably to be content with an uneasy kind of doze.

What a sudden tangle life had become since the discovery that Ronald Treherne was Ralph Trevanion!

Into that quiet, prosaic corner of Devonshire there had dropped a bit of romance which might any day of the week change from a comedy into a tragedy; and it seemed to the Viscount as if they were all inextricably involved in it.

What would Hilda and Wilfred say if their hero were stripped of his disguise, and dragged

as a would-be murderer to a prison and the dock?

It would throw such a black cloud of sorrow on their innocent lives that, young as they were, it would take years to make them recover it.

And as to Lady Dacre, he could not bear to think of what her feelings must be if the man whose only fault had resulted from loving her too much were hunted to ruin by her own husband.

Certainly it would solve the problem very nicely if Sir Thomas Dacre would slip quietly through their fingers into eternity.

He was not a popular man, neither a thorough friend, nor a generous landlord. Any one could see that he did not know how to treat the most charming wife that man ever had, and it was quite conceivable that Lady Dacre would be happier as a widow than a married woman.

Lord Wildgrave's reflections had just reached this point when the doctor came out of the inner room, and he went back into the hall to hear his verdict.

"I am happy to tell you," Dr. Adams said, cheerfully, "that Sir Thomas is in no immediate danger, and I think with great care we may be able to pull him through."

"I'm very glad to hear it," said Lord Wildgrave, readily, in spite of his recent conclusions, for it is so natural for any one of a kindly disposition to rejoice in another's well-being. "And I suppose there is no reason why Lady Dacre should not return with me to the Castle?"

"None at all!" was the prompt answer. Then there was a pause which Treherne was the first to break.

"This house is entirely at Lady Dacre's disposal, and we should feel highly honoured—shouldn't we, Gordon?—if she would look upon it as her own for the next few days."

"I think, on the contrary, that as you proved yourself such an excellent nurse to my boy, Lady Dacre could not do better than leave her husband in your hands. Do come home with me," said Lord Wildgrave, persuasively, as he moved towards the door, and passed her on the way.

Cyrilla hesitated, for she felt acutely all the embarrassment of her position. Was it possible to accept the smallest favour from Treherne's hands? and, on the other hand, could she have the barbarity to turn him out of his own house when he looked as if he had scarcely strength to stand?

"I know I could trust Mr. Treherne," she said, in a low voice, as a soft pink stole into her pale cheeks, "but he looks as if he needed nursing himself."

Treherne flushed, and the Colonel interposed before he could speak.

"You are quite right, Lady Dacre: he's used up. But I'm as fit as possible; I'll look after Sir Thomas to-night, and Treherne shall take his turn to-morrow night, and then in the daytime," he added, considerably, "we will give him up to you."

"And I'll send over his man first thing to-morrow—or rather to-day. Good-night to you all. Come, Lady Dacre," said the Viscount, hurriedly.

"I feel as if I were deserting my post," she said, plaintively, with a backward look towards her husband's still form on the bed.

Treherne slipped at once into the bedroom, as if to show that he would not be neglected, and Cyrilla, understanding exactly what he meant, bade good-bye to the others, and followed Lord Wildgrave down the hill.

They did not say much to each other during the drive. Lord Wildgrave made the horse go at a capital pace, and they were neither of them sorry when they drew up at the side door of the Castle. It was opened at once by the fat footman, who, for reasons of his own, had come downstairs from his "durance vile," and offered to sit up for his lordship.

"This fellow seems to be the only one who is up," the Viscount said, as soon as they were out of hearing. "Shall I send him over as

once with your husband's things, and let his own servant follow in the morning?"

"Oh! not that man!" looking terrified; "I wouldn't have him go for the world!"

"Do you know anything against him?" very much surprised.

Cyrella leant against the bannisters, and tried to collect her thoughts. If she let out that this man was a detective, she would be betraying her husband's trust, and yet if she gave no reason it would look so very odd.

She resolved to trust to Lord Wildgrave's courtesy, and let him think what he liked.

"I can't explain; but don't send him, please," looking up into his face with her sweet, imploring eyes.

"Not if you don't wish it," with a kindly smile, "but you've puzzled me immensely. Too late to talk about it to-night, but if you would tell your maid—no, I'll send a message to your husband's man in your name, and tell him to get Sir Thomas's things together, and start at once; he can have the farm cart. Good-night, Lady Dacre. Try to get to sleep as fast as you can, and don't bother about anything."

He left her with a warm pressure of the hand, but tired as he was, he had something to do before he went to bed.

With cautious steps he went down a long corridor till he reached the suite of rooms appropriated to his son. Very gently he opened a door, and shading his candle carefully, went on tip toe towards the bed. But his precautions were all unnecessary—Wilfred was wide awake, and sitting up, with flushed cheeks and unnaturally bright eyes.

"I've been listening for you such an awful time," he said, eagerly. "How is Ronald? Quite safe? Are you sure? I thought perhaps something dreadful had happened to him."

"My dear boy!" laying his hand on his son's hot head; "Treherne was saved before; we went to look for Sir Thomas."

"Yes; but Ronald's so brave; he might have gone to save Sir Thomas and been hurt. I got in such a funk, but I can sleep now," laying down with a smile.

His father sighed as he turned away.

(To be continued.)

## SAVED.

—O—

My boy Mark had asked me to invite his betrothed to the Cedars, and having made Mark's wishes my law during the twenty-eight years of his life, I at once wrote to Miss Doris Mayburn and gave her a cordial invitation to visit me.

She accepted in a graceful, pretty note that prepossessed me in her favour, and at the time appointed I drove to the station and met her when the train arrived. As she was the only passenger who left the train at our station, I had no trouble about finding her, and greeted her affectionately.

She was very, very pretty; pure blooded, with a face like one of Raphael's cherubim, almost babyish in its round outlines, wondering blue eyes, and short golden curls. She was very small, with helpless, childlike ways, and I wondered greatly at my boy's choice.

For Mark my grandson, orphaned in infancy, had grown to manhood under my care, and was a man grave, and rather sedate, of stern rectitude, devoted to his profession—that of a lawyer—and the last man in the world I should have expected to fall a victim to a baby face and childlike manner. And yet, he loved Doris Mayburn with the first true, strong love of his heart, and saw only perfection in her caressing ways.

In less than a week I ceased to wonder at Mark's infatuation. Doris was, without exception, the most lovable person I ever met in my long life of varied experience. She was nineteen years old, and had been most carefully educated, and behind her baby face

had a well-stocked brain. Her singing was simply perfect for an amateur, and she played well, though her fingers were seldom on the piano keys except to accompany her sweet, pure voice.

One of her great charms was the tender deference she paid to my age, without seeming even to consider me too old for a confidante and companion. We saw Mark only from Saturday afternoon till Monday morning as the Cedars was too far from London for daily trips. But although Doris talked often of her betrothed, of the preparations for her approaching wedding, she never seemed weary or dull in our quiet life. She read well, and we passed hours with our favourite authors; she sang for me; she worked me a gorgeous sofa, cushion, and we walked and drove out together.

But through all the charms of her manner, the innocent caressing ways habitual to her, there was an expression in her violet eyes that perplexed me. It was not sufficiently defined to be fear—more like a shadow of fear—and it was brief, passing away like a summer cloud across the sunshine.

Often she would look her little hands together, till the pressure looked as if it must pain her, while in her eyes would come a hungry look as if she was controlling some violent emotion by a great effort.

She had been at my house about three weeks, when I began to be troubled about the extra servant I had hired as her maid. She was a young girl from Ashurst, our post-town, who had been highly recommended to me by one of my own old servants, and she was willing and respectful; but I doubted her honesty.

Having had the same servants about me for years—women of tried principle—I had become careless about looks and keys, and seldom used them; but little trifles of value began to disappear most marvellously after Jane came. A gold pencil-case with diamond top, that had belonged to my husband, was the first thing that I missed; then followed a card-case of silver; small trinkets disappeared, and I was thinking Jane must be sent away, when, one morning, going unexpectedly to my room, I saw, through the open door, a reflection in my long mirror.

Unseen myself, I watched Doris Mayburn as she softly opened my box of jewels, took out a pair of diamond earrings, and put them upon the bureau. In her eyes was the look of fear, now positive, defined terror; and her tiny hands worked convulsively as she held them over the trinkets. Suddenly she snatched them, secreted them in her pocket, turned, and saw me.

With a cry that was terrible to hear, it was so full of despair, she literally threw herself at my feet, moaning as if in pain. I stood erect, looking at her. I am an old woman, and the new names for ladylike stealing were unknown to me.

My grandson's betrothed grovelling at my feet, was simply a thief, who had robbed me, and allowed an innocent servant to be suspected; for she knew my resolution regarding Jane. Presently she looked up.

"You will not tell Mark?" she said, imploringly. Then, seeing, I suppose, my utter disgust in my face, she cried:

"I cannot help it. You may blame me as you will, I cannot resist the inclination to steal. I do try, but when I see small articles I must take them. I do not want them; I will give you all I have taken back again, but I shall probably steal them again when I see an opportunity. I must do it!"

Then I took her from the ground, and looked into her eyes, trying to read the insanity I was sure was upon her. She lay in my arms like a child, sobbing pitifully, repeating her assertion of inability to resist the desire to steal, till, against my own reason, in spite of my rectitude and common sense, I found myself petting and pitying her, as if she was the victim of a fever.

But I would not promise to keep secret what I had discovered. Though I was won over to

a most profound pity, I shrank from the idea of my boy's wife being a thief.

It was a strange coincidence that on the very same evening Mark came home for his weekly visit, while we were chatting in the drawing room, said, gravely:

"I had a very painful case presented to me this morning. One of our leading city men wanted me to defend his daughter, who is the victim of kleptomania."

I felt Doris, who sat near me shiver, and slip an ice-cold hand into mine.

"Perhaps, you ladies," continued Mark, "do not know that kleptomania is the new name for fashionable theft. We are old-fashioned folks here, and have always called a thief, a thief! It is monstrous," he said, his eyes flashing, "to defend stealing because the thief is in high social position."

"But," I said, "they plead the temptation is irresistible."

"So may any thief plead! Supposing I were to walk into a bank, and feel an irresistible desire to run away with a few thousand pounds' worth of bank notes. Do you imagine judge or jury would acquit me?"

"But," I urged again, "if you had a dear friend a victim to this disease—if it is a disease—would you judge her so sternly?"

"I would. I could far sooner forgive a poor, starving wretch who took my purse when driven by want to crime, than I could a thief, who, needing nothing robbed me, and called the robbery kleptomania."

"But if it were a lady, delicate and refined, you would not send her to share the prison of common felons?"

"I would if she had fitted herself for their society by sharing their crime. Indeed, I should judge such a case far more severely, for there is no shadow of excuse for it. A poor girl, ignorant and starving, would have far more leniency at my hands than a lady who could so lower herself."

I looked at Doris. She was pale as death, and in her eye was a steady, mournful look I had never before seen there.

"Mark," she said, "if you had a dear friend who was afflicted with kleptomania, how would you advise her to overcome the temptation?"

Something in the voice of his betrothed moved Mark deeply, for he replied with a strange solemnity,—

"As all other temptations must be overcome—by constant struggle and fervent prayer."

I thought the time had come for these two to fully understand the painful position, and made some excuse to leave the room.

Not until I heard my boy go upstairs to his own apartment would I re-enter the drawing room. Doris was there, deathly pale, but with a certain womanly expression new to her sweet face.

"I have told him," she said; and her voice sounded hollow and forced. "He will not give me up, but I have resolved to leave you all for a long, long time. I will try to overcome the affliction of my life by struggle and prayer, as my darling advises. If I conquer I will return; if not, Mark's wife shall never be a thief."

She rose as she spoke, and, kissing me fondly, went to her room. I thought to have a long talk with her, to offer sympathy and counsel, but in the morning we found her room vacant, the bed undisturbed. She wrote to me soon, telling me she had walked to Ashurst and had caught the last train to London.

"I leave home to-day," she wrote, "and unless I can come back to you cured I will come back no more."

In her room I found all the little trinkets I had supposed were in Jane's hands. Mark and I talked often and gravely of the child he loved, sometimes hopefully, but often, as time wore away, sadly. For my grandson had repented often of his harsh, stern judgment, and was willing to think there was really a disease in fault.



"And yet," he would say, with mournful eyes, "if it was kleptomania that made Doris take your trinkets, why should we have sent to penal servitude the burglar who was caught stealing the plate a few years ago? That poor wretch was driven to crime by starvation, but there was no sentimentality in his lawyer's plea. He was merely a thief, and received the punishment of a thief."

"And you would send Doris to prison, too?"

"Heaven forbid! I cannot cease to love her, and pray that she may come back to us, as she promised."

So two years wore away, and we thought Doris was lost to us. Mark came every week, as usual, to spend Sunday with me, and we talked of his betrothed as we talk of the dearly-loved dead.

One Saturday afternoon I was in my own room, sewing, when a knock upon my door was followed by the entrance of a lady, a little lady, who stood hesitating about entering, till I said,—

"Doris, dear child, welcome!"

Then she nestled in my arms in the old loving way. But in her face I read the truth I longed to see, the principle that had overcome her temptation, the triumph of prayerful effort.

The baby-look was gone, and the violet eyes, retaining all their sweetness, were full of gentle dignity. The baby manner, too, had vanished in a quiet, lady-like deportment, very graceful and winsome.

"My dear, dear child," I said, taking off her hat and saque, "you are more than welcome."

"You will believe me, then," she said, earnestly, "when I tell you I have conquered that horrible inclination?"

I assured her most warmly of my sincere belief in her statement, my deep joy in her triumph. She told me of her struggles, her prayers, and the gradual wearing away of the desire to appropriate the property of others.

"For a year," she said, "I have purposely watched the opportunities for theft, for you are the only one who ever detected me, the only person, excepting Mark, who knows of my old infirmity. I could have stolen largely from friends I visited, for even my own parents knew nothing of my besetting sin. But the desire has left me. Mark may trust me!"

And Mark did trust her, and has never regretted his confidence. He comes, with his wife and children, to pass the summer months at the Cedars and he is not more stern and strict in his teaching to the little ones of the value of honesty, than is Doris his wife, who once believed herself an incurable kleptomaniac.

## POOR LADY BARBARA.

—101—

### CHAPTER XI.

MR. MEETING was quite as bewildered as Keith expected when "Mr. Higgins" revealed his true identity, but he instantly consented to join the party, and suggested his brother, a strapping young fellow of six-and-twenty, just now on a visit to Studley, should be enlisted in their service.

"Whatever happens then we are sure to come off victor. Old Mrs. Ashton would enjoy a hand-to-hand struggle with the widow amazingly, and if we leave Miss Browne to attend to Lady Barbara we then shall be more than a match for Mr. and Mrs. Jinks. It's lucky the old woman spoke to-day. To-morrow we should have had far more difficulty."

"Why?"

"It's evident, Mrs. Higgins, you have no curiosity, or you'd have heard long ago. All Studley is agog with the news. Mrs. Lenard's youngest brother has just returned from the West Indies, and is going to pay her a visit.

Mrs. Jinks has been shopping all the afternoon in anticipation."

"Leaving Lady Barbara alone, for I saw Mrs. Lenard myself driving with Miss Browne."

"Well, perhaps Mr. Jinks relieved guard. They're making a mighty fuss about this brother. Why on earth, if Mrs. Lenard is so fond of him, hasn't he been to see her before all these years?"

"The West Indies are some way off!"

The agent shook his head.

"There's more in it than meets the eye. Perhaps if Miss Browne is really Lord Keith's daughter Lady Barbara means to leave her the Grange, and it has struck Mrs. Lenard her brother might like to rule there as prince consort."

Was that it? Did that explain poor Blanche's signal of distress? Keith said nothing, but his face grew very white and stern.

"I suppose you have telegraphed to Mr. Bruce?" observed the agent, "he ought to be here soon."

"I have written I am on the track. To-morrow I shall telegraph, and I daresay he will start at once. Somehow, Meeting, I have been put off the scent so often I could not bear to have Mr. Bruce arrive till I was certain of success."

The agent shrugged his shoulders.

"You're as certain of it now as if you stood there at Lady Barbara's side this minute. Certain of seeing her, that is, the poor creature may have been frightened into a state of imbecility by this time. I think Mrs. Ashton deserves hanging for not coming forward sooner!"

"I think she fancied it was a kind of loyalty to the dead to keep silent. By the way, Meeting, is she right in asserting that Lady Barbara lost everything if she married in her father's lifetime without his consent?"

"Perfectly correct. Mr. Bruce holds a letter from Lord Munro respecting the disposal of his estate if his daughter Barbara married against his wishes, or if she should die intestate. None of the family, it seems, rated her intellect very highly. She was a beauty, but very far from clever."

"I suppose my cousin will be the heiress? she certainly ought to be."

"I differ from you as to the 'ought.' Her father had an enormous sum down from this old lord when he consented to the cutting off of the entail. How he managed to run through the money I can't think. Of course, if Lord Munro had known he left children he might have thought of their benefit, but I believe the Earl was absolutely unaware of his son's marriage; in that case he probably left all he had to charities. He was a very benevolent man, and an almost universal subscriber to hospitals. Still, we shall soon know the truth; Mr. Bruce has kept that letter carefully all these years, though he looked on it as so much waste paper, for we both supposed Mrs. Lenard had insisted on Lady Barbara's making a will in her favour long ago. The trust letter has done one thing: it prevented Lady Barbara's alienating any portion of the lands or property."

The agent's brother, Tom Meeting, was perforce taken into full confidence, and entered with heart and soul into the expedition.

"I shall be paying off a grudge of my own at the same time, Mr. Norman," he said, cheerfully. "I've longed to be equal with that widow ever since she complained to Jim that I made love to her. Why, I was a lad of seventeen, and she looked as old as she does now."

Mr. Meeting gave rather a felonious air to the undertaking, for he insisted on providing himself with all the tools needful for window-breaking and lock-picking, three dark lanterns and a flask of wine.

Tom objected to the last item; all the others he said were quite in keeping; but no burglar hampered himself with refreshment of his own, trusting to the enforced hospitality of the houses he entered.

"We are safe to want it, Tom" retorted the agent. "For though Mrs. Ashton is a plucky old soul I think she has promised more than she will be able to manage without a little something to revive her by the way."

"She promised to meet me at nine," said Keith.

"That's quite an hour too soon. How can we let her know? It'll be death to her rheumatics waiting an hour in the night air, poor old creature."

"I have it," said Tom, who was thoroughly good-natured in spite of the malice he cherished against Mrs. Lenard. "The mother was talking of sending the old body a basin of soup, so I will take it myself, and tell her you can't possibly see to her business before ten. No one else in the room will be able to make out what business we mean, and she is quick enough to understand it herself."

It was a sacrifice to the young man's dignity to carry the soup through the village street, but it was a far greater trial to his feelings to have to interview the old lady in bed.

Granny had retired there early in the afternoon, according to the fraud she had resolved on; and when she heard the agent had sent a message she insisted on its being delivered personally.

Her daughter-in-law apologised humbly to Tom for the trouble, and said she could not think what mother had been worrying Mr. Meeting about.

The young man, however, bore his trials bravely, even to sitting down near the bed and listening without a smile while Mrs. Ashton explained to him she only wanted to see his brother about the waterpipes and drains.

"What a diplomatist that old woman would have made," said Keith, when Tom told the story. "She was born for intrigues."

It was a fine night, which was fortunate for other things besides Mrs. Ashton's rheumatism. It really seemed as though the inmates of the Grange had played almost into Keith's hands, for Mrs. Lenard's cold was so bad that she went to bed at eight and she kept Blanche—for whom, despite her conduct, she had as much liking as a woman of her character could feel—so long administering warm drinks and shaking up pillows that when the girl got to the door of her own room she found it locked.

Evidently Jinks had retired for the night, and thinking the young stranger already in bed, had kindly secured her from being intruded on.

Unluckily, as Blanche thought at first, the key was gone, and she saw herself with the choice of hunting up the much-feared Mehalah in her own premises and extorting the key from her or of passing the night in Mrs. Lenard's sitting room, where there was a very comfortable sofa, and the fire still burned brightly.

Blanche chose the latter course. She went to the oak coal-chest and replenished the fire, relighted the wax candles in the large silver sconces, and sat down to think, for though, wrapped in an elderdown coverlet Mrs. Lenard had been using early in the evening she might have slept almost as comfortably as in her own bed she felt preternaturally wide awake.

When she and Keith Norman agreed on the token which was to call him to her aid they neither of them dreamed what special danger would befall her.

That very morning, Mrs. Lenard with the sweetest smiles, the most caressing manner, had broken to Blanche news which made the poor girl long to rush back to London, even if she had to walk every step of the way.

Nothing but the real pity and anxiety she felt for Lady Barbara, nothing but the promise she had given Keith kept her another night at the Grange. But for these she would have leaped out of the phæton and boldly made her escape somehow, feeling Mrs. Lenard was so generally disliked no one would have helped her to regain possession of her captive.

But as it was Blanche felt she would have been like a soldier deserting his post had she left the Grange without warning Keith. She was certain he would find some means of communicating with her, and all that evening she had been listening eagerly for an unexpected knock at the deserted door.

To-morrow afternoon would be too late. To-morrow, at five o'clock, Mr. William Lenard, brother to Lady Barbara's companion, was expected at the Grange; and her aunt had arranged—so Mrs. Lenard told poor, trembling Blanche—that as her house was no pleasant home for a young girl, Mr. Lenard would be a more fitting person to take charge of her niece, and would, after a speedy marriage, remove her to a more congenial home.

Marry a man she had never seen! Blanche would have refused even that at any cost; but the fate prepared for her was even more distasteful. Marry a man closely related to Mrs. Lenard! Link her whole life with that of a woman she shrank from with loathing dread! She would rather have thrown herself from one of the windows of the Grange than have yielded.

But Blanche, though troubled deeply by this new complication of her position, was too brave quite to despair.

She knew if will and perseverance could manage it, Keith Norman would be with her himself, or contrive to remove her from the Grange when once he had seen her signal of distress.

If any unforeseen chance made his coming too late, Blanche had quite resolved on her next step. She would wait, without any open show of hostility, until the next time she was in the village with Mrs. Lenard, and then she would, at any risk, jump from the phaeton. If Keith had left the Stindley Hotel, James Meeking at least would be still in the village, and as her aunt's agent would surely give her a shelter until she could hear from Dr. Ward.

It was all planned out. She believed Keith would come; but if Mrs. Lenard was too wily for him, if the widow contrived to prevent his entering the Grange, at least Blanche had decided on her only plan.

To have thought out the future and faced its dangers bravely made those dangers seem less.

The hour of quiet thought had given Blanche new courage, and finding sleep impossible she took up a book, and forgot in its pages the dangers hovering round her path.

She was brought back to actual life by the sound of unmistakable footsteps in the next wing. Much alarmed she caught up one of the canoes, and going to the half-door which shut off the west wing from the rest of the house opened it, half expecting Jinks had discovered the mistake and returned to look her up safely for the night inside instead of outside her own chamber, but the sight which met Blanche's eyes well-nigh took away her breath.

Her trust had not been in vain. Only a few hours had passed since, by her mute signal of distress, she had implored Keith Norman's help, and here he was in person to give it.

And in his own true character, too. The wig, beard, and whiskers of Mr. Higgins were utterly discarded.

His skin was the colour nature intended it, and he was restored to the original of the image which had lived in Blanche's memory since their first meeting at the little railway station.

With one faint cry she sprang forward and took his hand. Her troubles were forgotten now her hero had come.

"Silence and caution, my dear girl," he whispered.

Then Blanche being past the entrance that is actually in the west wing Keith coolly locked the green half-door, and so cut off all communication with the rest of the house.

"Where does Mrs. Lenard sleep?"

"Upstairs."

"And the Jinks?"

"Their rooms are next Mrs. Lenard's, but I think Mehalah is backwards and forwards a great deal."

Keith led her down the corridor, and there she saw Mr. Meeking and a tall young man. The latter was administering a glass of wine to old Mrs. Ashton, who seemed almost tired out.

"Blanche," said Mr. Norman, when they had reached the little group, "I want you to tell Mrs. Ashton and these gentlemen exactly what you heard in the pink room?"

The girl obeyed him. Granny nodded her head emphatically, as she gave back her empty glass to Tom Meeking.

"That was my Lady Barbara right enough. Sure, she always did moan when she was in pain. Even as a child she seemed as if she hadn't strength to have a real good cry and have done with it."

They went into the pink room, that strange party—the young girl, the old nurse, and the three men. Granny kept up bravely, but she was trembling from head to foot.

"I'll show you the way; but I don't think I can go down with you," she said, apologetically. "I am that tired, and my bones do ache."

"Blanche will stay with you," said Keith, quickly, for he had been trying to find an excuse to leave his cousin in the pink room, some instinct telling him the scene below would not be fit for a young, tender-hearted girl.

In perfect silence the three men went down the steep ladder-like staircase, which a sliding panel in the floor had revealed. Never while he lived did Keith Norman quite forget that moment.

The room in which they found themselves was a mere crib, holding only one chair and a pallet bed.

On the latter lay stretched the shrunken emaciated form of the woman who, when Meeking had seen her last, was in the prime of life, and who had looked then, if possible, more beautiful than in the days of her early girlhood.

At thirty-five Barbara Keith had been the loveliest woman for miles round, and now, eleven years later, James Meeking saw her again, a creature so thin that surely only starvation had produced those hollow cheeks, those lean, claw-like fingers. Of beauty, of comeliness, there was no trace. It was hard to believe the eyes which gazed on the intruders with such feeble terror had ever been bright and sparkling.

"Don't you know me?" said James Meeking, speaking with almost a woman's gentleness. "Won't you try to speak to me?"

"Lady Barbara," began Keith, and then his words failed him, for this poor wreck of humanity joined her hands together, and pleaded to him for mercy.

"I never meant to do it! I didn't care for money. I wanted to tell Mr. Bruce I was married, but they wouldn't let me!"

"Who wouldn't?" asked Meeking, kindly.

"She and Gus."

"We know you never meant any harm," said Keith, soothingly. "We only want to help you."

"It was for their sakes," pined the poor creature. "Gus wanted money so badly, and he thought I was a heiress. He took me abroad directly Mona died, and he said no one would ever know."

"Where is he now?" asked Keith.

"He died. The wrong did not prosper, he died only a few weeks after Mona."

"And then you came home?"

"Patty brought me here. She said it was a great risk for her to run, for if anyone knew what I had done they could put me in prison, and punish her for helping me to escape."

Keith could have wept, strong man though he was, as he realized the course of torture practised for eleven years on this poor creature. At this moment he could have wrung

Mrs. Lenard's neck with a great deal of pleasure.

"You won't take me to prison?" pleaded Lady Barbara. "It was so long ago, and I have suffered so much, and the money did me no good. Patty has had to spend it all in paying people to keep the secret; I haven't had a shilling in my purse for years, and lately Patty has got so unkind."

"I will never take you away from the Grange," said Keith, persuasively. "But this is not a comfortable room. We must see about moving you to a better one."

"Patty says it isn't safe!"

"Who is Patty?"

"She used to wait on me and Mona long ago; then she married. Mona never liked her, but you see she was his sister, and Gus asked me to be good to her."

Norman guessed the truth then. The husband might have been a worthless, never-do-well, and have married the beauty for her expectations, but he had won her love and had made her happy for the one short year of their married life, save for the fraud he had committed, which, after all, was not against his wife, there was nothing to be laid to his charge, the cruelty, the oppression, and the long course of daily torture by working on poor Barbara's fears, all these were his sister's work.

"I have brought some one who knew you long ago," said Keith, cheerfully. "Have you forgotten your old nurse?"

"I won't see her! Patty says she is a spy, and would send me to prison, and I feel so ill, maybe I am dying, and I would rather die here. It isn't a very nice room, but it is better than a prison."

"You shall never go to prison," said Keith, as he tenderly raised the poor fragile form, wrapped it in a blanket, and carried it in his strong young arms up the narrow staircase, through the pink room, down the long corridor, right out of the west wing to the pretty parlour where Blanche had thought to pass the night, and where she and Nurse Ashton had gone a few minutes before as a hint from Tom Meeking, to make all ready for the sufferer.

It was not till she was laid on the sofa, and her old nurse was crying over her, that the terrified expression left her face.

"I should have known you anywhere, Goody," she said to Mrs. Ashton; "and you, too, Mr. Meeking; but who are the others?"

"This is your niece," said Norman, leading Blanche up to the dying woman, "your brother's daughter."

"Which of them? Keith had two little girls, Blanche and Dorothy. I promised him to be good to them, but Patty could never find out where they were. It was a stolen marriage, but it wronged no one. It was not like mine."

"I am Blanche," whispered the girl, bending over her aunt. "We lost Dolly when she was a little girl; but Mr. Bruce found her, and I am to see her very soon."

Mr. Meeking had despatched his brother for a doctor, and told him to bring back the vicar, who was also a magistrate.

He had more experience by far in life's sad scenes than Keith Norman, and he saw quite well that Lady Barbara's hours were numbered.

The woman whose seclusion had been the talk of Stindley for eleven years lay very quiet and silent, but with a smile of ineffable peace upon her pale face; she even smiled faintly when Keith pushed her sofa nearer to the fire, and the old nurse formally presented him to his aunt as "Lady Diana's boy."

"He has her eyes," said Lady Barbara, slowly. "And so they called him after us. I am so glad to see him and Blanche just once! but why didn't they come before?"

No one answered that question. They could not tell the dying woman her own folly



had made it well-nigh impossible for any one to break through Lady Barbara's seclusion.

Mrs. Lenard had taken a sleeping draught, and so was not easily disturbed; while Mehlah Jinks and her husband were so used to end their day's labours with extensive consumption of strong gin that it would at any time have taken little less than an earthquake to awaken them before their usual hour, so no hint of what was happening reached them.

It was nearly three o'clock when Tom Meeking returned in John Ashton's fly, driving the vicar and Dr. Carlyle.

Both were old men, and both had known Lady Barbara from her birth.

In spite of Mr. Martin's brief infatuation for Mrs. Lenard he had very kindly feelings for the mistress of Studley Grange.

Perhaps when he received Tom Meeking's summons, with a very plain statement of what had been going on at the Grange, he felt a little ashamed to remember how much he had admired the wily widow.

"At last!" was his kindly greeting to Barbara Keith. "My dear, I have longed to see you all these years. Why did not you trust your old friends sooner?"

"She could not," replied Keith. "Can't you see she has been brought nearly to the grave by cruelty and neglect? But we will change all that now. A little care, and a taste of happiness will soon restore her to health."

Dr. Carlyle shook his head.

"Too late," he whispered to Keith. "You have given her the sight of friendly faces round her death-bed; you have soothed her last hours, but you cannot give her one day more of life."

Too true. Other eyes had seen that besides the doctor's.

Mr. Martin had taken out a pocket-inkstand, and was writing very quickly the words which fell from the dying woman's lips.

No long story; very short and very simple. Only the date and place of her marriage, and of her husband's death; and of how, when he was gone, she would gladly have given up the Grange, but she was told it was too late. By once conceding her marriage she had brought herself in danger of the law.

To be safe from prison—that had been her one aim all these eleven years.

She knew nothing of the money remitted her. Patty managed everything.

She asked her to send her brother's widow some money, but Patty could never find her out.

There were some papers about her brother and his wife in the desk, but Patty kept the key.

Keith was married at St. Clement's, in the Strand, perhaps his children were christened there.

He was married in his real name; but his wife never knew his true rank. Lately they both went by the name of Browns.

This was his little girl, they told her, and she could see the likeness.

When Mrs. Lenard opened the door of her own sitting-room the next morning to reproach Mehlah with the tardy arrival of her breakfast she found it tenanted by old nurse Ashton, and something very still and quiet, over which the old woman was jealously keeping guard.

"She's gone!" was Goody's greeting to her foe, "and you can't never torture her no more. She made a beautiful end, and she died with two of her own kin beside her, and the parson a praying his prayers!"

"I want Jinks!" interrupted the widow, hardly able to find her voice.

"Jinks is in the town prison by this time, and her husband too, for stealing. Maybe you'll join them. I hear, it all depends on what answers you give to Mr. Meeking's questions! He's waiting for you below."

The gentlemen had arranged together that James Meeking should manage the affair. Keith was too much affected to be the one to

lay down terms. Though a telegram had been despatched to Mr. Bruce, they could not tell the exact hour of his arrival, and they all longed to have done with Mrs. Lenard, so Mr. Martin and Dr. Carlyle both agreed that the agent having been directly in Lady Barbara's employ was the fittest person to deal with the widow.

He offered her two alternatives—a free departure from Studley if she gave up all the private papers of the Keith family, of which she had obtained possession, and disgorged her stolen hoards—or prosecution.

At first Mrs. Lenard tried to carry things with a high hand; protesting she had taken nothing—not a five pound note. Of course Lady Barbara had made her presents, but she supposed the agent would not try to rob her of those.

Mr. Meeking stood firm as a rock. He reminded her she well knew Lady Barbara was not the true owner of the Grange, and that in taking gifts bought with its revenue she was accepting stolen property. No, she must do as he said, or join Mr. and Mrs. Jinks in prison.

"Do you want to make me a beggar?"

"You can become a convict, if you prefer it. You would certainly be convicted of fraud, and a Yorkshire jury would probably bring you in guilty of manslaughter, for I can tell you your conduct to Lady Barbara, if revealed, will bring down on you popular execration. I shouldn't wonder if they lynched you. You see, the Keiths have been loved and respected here for centuries!"

She was convinced then. She produced vouchers for investments representing a hundred thousand pounds; she said—and the statement proved the truth—the rest of her ill-gotten gains had been lost by the failure of a large bank.

More precious in Keith's eyes than these vouchers were the certificates of the marriage of Mary Browne and Viscount Keith, and of the baptism of their children—Dorothy and Blanche.

These once gained, there was no advantage to be had by pressuring Mrs. Lenard; it could not bring back Lady Barbara, or undo one iota of her sufferings; and as Mrs. Lenard, being Lady Barbara's sister-in-law, could claim a connection with the Keiths, it was not advisable to see her a convict, though Mr. Norman declared she deserved it.

They saw her safely off the premises; turned in half-a-dozen of Mrs. Ashton's family to take temporary care of the Grange, and then it was hastily arranged that the agent's mother should have the pleasure of receiving the Honorable Miss Keith as her guest until the arrival of Mr. Bruce.

The old lawyer's conduct puzzled every one. He must have had the telegram at nine o'clock; but evening came, and brought no answer. It was only the next morning that Keith heard from him—a message brief and alarming.

"Will start at once. Only had yours late last night. Had left Fulham early. Terrible railway accident. L. J. much shaken."

Keith did not show the telegram to Blanche, for he feared the L. J. referred to her sister. He rejoiced unselfishly that his darling was Lord Keith's younger child. If the Earl of Munro's testamentary letter devised his estate to his son's heir the elder daughter would take all.

He should be free to tell Blanche of his love without treachery, his fixed resolution being never to ask a woman richer than himself to be his wife.

## CHAPTER XII, AND LAST.

THE girl who had so long thought herself Joan Disney stood motionless by the side of the dead man; the Doctor came in soon, but she did not need his kindly words to tell her all was over; her mind seemed in one whirl, her brain felt tottering; never once did she think of the change this would make in her

lover's prospects, the one feeling uppermost with her was thankfulness for the strange chance meeting.

"I am so glad I was there," she murmured half to herself. "All the sting will be taken out of his unkindness now. I shall never think harshly of him again."

Dr. Gray had caught the words, and was looking at Joan in wonderment.

"Why, I thought he was a stranger to you; if I had known otherwise I would never have given you the shock of witnessing his death!"

Joan looked up at the kind old man, the heavy tears trembling in her eyes.

"We had never met before," she said, simply; "but I had heard of him all my life; until a month ago I believed myself his uncle's daughter."

"Is it possible?" the doctor, like the rest of the world, read the newspaper, and had heard of the case of "Disney versus Browne, otherwise Disney." "Do you mean that you are Dorothy Browne?"

"Yes."

"Why, of all the world I should say you had most reason to dislike him, poor fellow, and yet you are crying for his death."

"I can't explain it," said Joan; "but I was never angry with him. I seemed to feel he could not help acting as he did, just because of his pride, and I am so glad I saw him, so thankful that he at least died my friend."

"Then you told him?"

But the excitement and strain had been too much for Joan, coming as they did after weeks of sorrow. She half tottered as she tried to reach the door, and but for Dr. Gray's supporting arm must have fallen.

The kindly surgeon took her to his own house and left her in his wife's care, at her request telegraphing to Mr. Bruce's office. That was the reason Keith Norman was kept so long without a reply to his message. It reached Rochester House after Mr. Bruce had started in the morning, and his usual hour of return found him at Mortlake identifying the body of the poor young Earl.

Dr. Gray himself went to break the news to Mrs. Disney, for that task Kenneth Bruce would not undertake; he could be truly sorry for her, could even sympathize with her grief; but even now he could not forgive her treatment of Joan, and while he was sorry he had parted from the young Earl in anger, he never regretted the course he had taken.

The Grays insisted on keeping Joan and her guardian for the night, and the morning found her so ill and weary that Mr. Bruce agreed at once to the doctor's wish she should remain where she was, specially as her testimony might be required at the inquest, which must soon be held on Lord Landale, who, strange to say, was the only passenger killed, though many had sustained serious injuries.

Poor Mr. Bruce! Business at his office urgently demanded attention, the telegram from Keith—forwarded from Fulham—required him to go to Yorkshire; he was at his wife's end with over-work, and it was actually not until he was in the train for Studley that the fact dawned on him his old friend's petted child would soon in very truth bear the rank he had believed her birthright, indeed, a higher one, since a Countess is of more importance than an Earl's daughter. Dorothy, Countess of Landale, and only a little while before she had been taunted as poor, obscure, and nameless!

"I am sure she never thought of it," declared the doctor. "I am glad Bob has her promise, or she might have refused him from some quixotic notion; she was not good enough for an Earl, fancy that good, simple-hearted fellow, Lord Landale; well, he will do his duty in any rank, but I am afraid St. Ursula's will miss him sadly."

They buried Lady Barbara with the honours due to Lord Munro's daughter; but the fact of her marriage was never noised abroad, indeed, there was no need, for as she had died intestate, the supplement to her father's will took effect as a matter of course. It was read by



["YOU SHALL NEVER GO TO PRISON!" SAID KEITH, RAISING THE SLIGHT FORM IN HIS ARMS.]

Kenneth Bruce directly after the funeral, and there were present, among a long line of notables, the FitzTemples and the new Earl of Landale, who had walked side by side with Keith in the procession to the grave, since had she lived but a little longer he too would have become Lady Barbara's nephew.

Poor Bob was sadly downcast; it was his second funeral in one week. And he had loved his cousin Edgar so truly and so well, it was pain to him to think they had ever been at variance, while the idea of benefiting by his death seemed to the kind-hearted young surgeon almost wicked.

One person whom some people had thought should attend Lady Barbara's funeral was absent—her brother-in-law. Mr. Norman might have expected an invitation, but Keith had not sent it, knowing that Bryan was making such a failure as a solicitor that his father could not be absent from the office three days without great danger of losing clients.

And the document kept so carefully for so many years proved very simple, and showed that Lord Munro had not only heard of his son's marriage, but had inquired very carefully into his own descendants.

He left, falling issue by Lady Mona or her second sister, his whole property at their deaths to his grandson, Keith Norman, with the sole condition that it should be entailed on his eldest son, who was, on coming of age, to take and bear the name of Keith.

"You are lord of all!" cried Kenneth Bruce, wringing his favourite's hand, "and my office will be the loser, for with twenty thousand a year you can't devote yourself to law, Keith," and the old man's voice grew almost solemn in its earnestness. "Who will say after this there is such a thing as chance? Mrs. Norman's cruel scheming to turn you adrift in favour of her own son, and your father's weak submission to her will, were

only the workings of Providence by which you were driven to the rescue."

For six months after that funeral day Rochester House was brightened by the presence of two young ladies, Dorothy and Blanche Keith, who learned to love each other with true sisterly affection, although all their youth had been spent apart. Everyone knew the true name of the elder of these girls, but yet her friends never called her anything but "Joan," and the old servants at Fulham would never address her except as "my lady."

Her cousin, Keith, told her one day, smiling, that as the title would so soon be hers by right, it really was a pity to try and make them change it.

It was mainly due to the persuasions of his two wards—as he called the sisters—that Mr. Bruce decided to give up his profession and keep Rochester House for the winter, and build himself a pretty cottage in Yorkshire for his chief abode.

As both the girls ruled over him with despotism away, no time was lost; Joan would fain have had a second cottage built near her future home, but Mr. Bruce declared he hated Barton and the neighbourhood, and Keith whispered to his cousin, he believed that the old man would never be happy near Mrs. Norman, for whom he had—without ever seeing her—the strongest aversion.

The result was Joan yielded the point, and Mr. Bruce's Studley home was rising beneath the bricklayer's hands, where one fair June morning there was a double wedding at Studley church, and the two sisters whose fates had hitherto been so different were both united each to the man of her choice.

Mrs. Disney did not long survive her son; but she lived to hear of the birth of a Viscount Disney, and she sent a touching letter to Bob, reminding him of his old love for Edgar, and begging him not to let her boy's name die out;

so Joan's first born was christened after the man whose dying lips had asked for her caress, and a few months later Mrs. Disney died, bequeathing all she had to leave to the baby boy.

Mrs. Norman has now quite ceased to talk of her father and to boast of the Fords; her conversation now is full of her daughter, Lady FitzTemple, and her son, the master of Studley Grange, and the first of these two is no other than little Kathleen, who spent a year with Keith soon after his marriage, and fascinated the young baronet. Sir John FitzTemple, between whose family and Lord Munroe's a very old friendship subsisted.

The Grange has now quite recovered its old beauty, and both Keith and his wife, having generous natures, Mrs. Norman and all her brood have enjoyed the glory of a visit there. But as for Mr. Bruce, the Grange might almost be called his home (Lady Landale declares she is jealous), he is such a frequent guest; and another old acquaintance comes just as often, but she goes to the back door and uses the servants' staircase, for though her son John is Mr. Norman's coachman, and her daughter own maid to Mrs. Norman, Mrs. Ashton's favourite haunt in the grand old house is the spacious nursery, where she is never tired of caressing little Keith, the future master of Studley, and admiring pretty Baby Dorothy. They are fine children, she assures every one, and good as they are fine; but, and of this drawback she informs even the exulting parents themselves, pretty babies as they are, they will never be the equal of (Lady Diana's boy). Then should her listener be a stranger, or as they express it in Studley language a 'foreigner,' the chances are that Granny Ashton will honour them by the history of the days when the Grange was well-nigh deserted, and the strange chance by which her nephew was driven to the rescue of POOR LADY BARBARA.

[THE END.]





[ARTHUR VANDERGROEN TWINED HIS ARMS ROUND INA, AND SPRANG INTO THE TURBULENT SEA.]

NOVELETTE.]

## TWO IN ONE GRAVE.

—O—  
CHAPTER I.

"O joyous days of life and love! O happy hopeful days!

'Twas yet but May, and here and there,  
Pink and white the blossoms fell,  
Quivering down through the summer air,  
On the shaven sward so trim and bare.  
Oh! I remember well."

And so you are in love, Tracy, really in love?"

"Really, my dear fellow. Earnestly, desperately, and—"

"I trust not hopelessly?"

"Well—I don't know."

"Don't know! You, the master of Cuthbert Royal, and all the broad acres that lie around. young, handsome, clever, fascinating, you don't know if this demoiselle you fancy returns your love! How is that? Is the lady coy and shy?"

"No—not exactly that."

"What then?"

"I can hardly tell you, Joe. I don't know what there is about her that makes me doubtful of winning her, and yet I am very doubtful."

"Is she like 'The Proud Ladye,' Whyte-Melville sings of?"

"How do you mean?"

"Difficult to please."

"Somewhat."

"And not very gracious when you try to please her?"

"No; generally wants something else done."

"More risky and difficult?"

"Yes."

"That's rather a bad sign."

"Do you think so?" very eagerly.

"Yes. A woman is generally considerate of the man of whom she is honestly fond."

"I think you are right," agreed the young Master of Cuthbert Royal, a trifle dismally.

"However, don't despair, old man. 'Faint heart never won fair lady.' You must be bold and venturesome. Take the citadel by storm, and win the victory. Some women are easily won in that way, though they would despise timid and fearful wooing."

"Possibly; still I am sure Ina Lawless will never be easily won."

"She must be difficult to please if you and your possessions don't please her!" said Joe Hadfield with conviction, and then his eyes wandered round the cosy apartment in which they were sitting.

It was panelled with oak, time-blackened and polished like glass, with a floor and mantelpiece to match. Here and there on the shining boards was laid the skin of some fierce wild animal, in many cases the head belonging to the skin being hung on the wall, its great glass eyes gleaming with almost living brightness, foxes' brushes were flanked with hunting crops, stag antlers with their polished hoofs, a stuffed owl stared wisely from its pedestal at a pelican with a preposterously long beak, two or three snakes were curled round branches of trees that jutted out from the walls, boxing gloves, foils, masks, fishing-rods, guns, whips, swords, pistols, pipes of all sizes and kinds, lay about in picturesque confusion. There were cases of rare and beautiful birds, and curious fish, and some small monkeys, a few sporting pictures, a variety of tobacco jars, a smoker's cabinet which stood open, and disclosed rows of cigars and cigarettes, a liqueur stand, a pyramid of glass, representing an iceberg, out of which peeped soda water bottles, and a tray containing glasses, and spirit and wine decanters stood on the table at Tracy Cuth-

bert's elbow, while before the fire, on the bear-skin rug, lay half-a-dozen dogs, of different sizes and breeds, commencing with a diminutive fox-terrier and going up to a great mastiff with hanging jaws and fierce aspect, and in their midst, enjoying the best place and the greatest warmth from the fire was a huge tabby cat, with tiger markings, who seemed quite at home amongst his sworn foes, for his head lay on a bull-dog's back, and his feet were curled up amongst the long hair of an otter hound.

The chairs on which the young men were sitting were of oak, enriched with carvings of foxes' and horses' heads, the cushions of deep, warm-hued velvet, that harmonized well with the dusky oak panelling. The whole room wore an aspect of luxury, and suggested that the owner was well endowed with the mammon of unrighteousness.

There was nothing lacking that could give comfort or please the senses of a young sporting Englishman.

"Yes, she must be difficult to please," repeated Hadfield, after his survey of the room, for being poor himself, only a nearly penniless "sizar," he had naturally a great veneration for wealth and the luxuries and comforts it could procure.

"She is," replied Cuthbert, gloomily. "I have never failed before with a woman."

"Perhaps because you did not care to succeed."

"Possibly."

"You are over-anxious, my boy."

"Perhaps. Then she is so lovely, what man would not be anxious? She has a host of admirers."

"I warrant not one to come up to yourself, Tracy. But—tell me all about it."

"Well, it was last May I first saw her. My steward told me the Dene Cottage was let to a Mrs. Lawless, a widow with two daughters, but I took little or no note of the news. What did a cottage let, more or less, matter to me?

However, soon after I noticed two girls in the Park. You know I don't object to people coming in now and then, and any tenants have the run of it, and I concluded they were tenants. I saw them so often as first I made a point of galloping by as hard as I could whenever I saw them, but one day when walking I came face to face with them, and the loveliness of the older girl made an impression at once on me. She is exquisitely fair, Joe, with a satiny white skin like the petal of a flower, tinged with pink on the cheeks, her hair is yellow, bright yellow, the colour of ripened corn; her features small and regular, and her eyes as blue as the Atlantic. I'm sure you'll think me an awful ass, Joe, speaking in such terms of any woman, only if you could see her you would understand better. She exercises a spell, fascinates a fellow, don't you know."

Joe of course declared that he did not think his host a fool, at which Cuthbert appeared considerably relieved and continued his narrative.

"Her figure, too, is superb; she is taller by half a head than the average run of girls, and beautifully proportioned. Her sister Poppy is a pretty little thing, blue-eyed like Ina, but her complexion is darker and richer, and her hair of a bright nut brown. She is barely fifteen, and a little imp for mischief, and yet frank and free, and guileless as the birds and deer she loves so well—quite a child of nature. Well, after a while, to be candid, after I noticed how lovely Ina was, I thought it would be only courteous to go and call at the Dene Cottage; so I went one afternoon and found the widow and her daughters at home."

"What sort of a woman is Mrs. Lawless?" asked Hadfield, a queer kind of twinkle in his grey eyes, the suspicion of a smile on his ugly face.

"A very jolly kind of woman, never sad when she can be gay, a regular society woman, and one eminently fitted to shine in the world as a hostess, and giver of successful entertainments. It's a thousand pities that she is poor."

"Oh, she is poor, then?" interposed Joe, his eyes twinkling more.

"Yes, very. Her husband was a captain in the Creamshire regiment, and when he died he left her only a beggarly pension of two or three hundred a year. That's why she came down here as soon as her daughters' education was practically finished; she heard living was cheap, and the cottage going for a mere nominal rent, and plenty of fish to be had at all times at Dene, so she made up her mind to settle on my estate, and as she herself says, finish her days in peace."

"I see," remarked Joe, dryly. "And is she at peace?"

"She has a great many friends and acquaintances."

"Does she entertain at all?"

"She is at home every Tuesday, and last summer she had two or three little dances."

"Dances!" ejaculated Hadfield in amazement. "How does she manage that? Surely two couples couldn't revolve comfortably in the liliputian drawing-room of the cottage!"

"We danced on the lawn," explained Cuthbert.

"You were a guest, then?"

"Oh, yes. It happened strangely enough that Tracy threw me, just near the cottage last May, and my arm was broken."

"And they took you in, like good Samaritans?" smiled Joe.

"Yes. Mrs. Lawless saw the accident, and was one of the first to rush out to my assistance. She had me carried into her place, sent for the doctor, and insisted on my remaining there for some days. I was nothing loath. They were extremely kind, and I knew I should find the Royal very dull as an invalid. Miss Lawless devoted herself to me and my fractured member. She had always seemed so cold and reserved that I was all

the more flattered at her sweet, womanly solicitude for me and the interest she evinced in my illness. She came and sat with me every day, and did her best to amuse me and while away the tedium of the long hours, playing, and singing, and reading to me. The room seemed to grow dark when she was not there, as though a sunbeam had vanished from it. I began to look for her coming, and long for her presence. And at night, when the pain of my knitting arm kept me awake, I would lie and think of how she smoothed my pillows, how she looked down at me, her cold, proud eyes softened, and seem to hear again the sweet notes of her voice as she sang to me. It was a delightful time, and I did not want it to come to an end, and yet Ina puzzled me then—as she puzzles me now. She has not a shade of coquetry about her. Despite her great loveliness she is entirely free from coquetry, and this absence of affectation was peculiarly charming to me. Still, knowing that she was not a coquette, I failed to understand why she should freeze when I grew warm, why retreat into her habitual reserve when I wished to advance. So long as I was friendly, simply, it was all right; the moment I attempted to become lover-like she managed to convey to me in some subtle way that the alteration in my manner and bearing was disagreeable to her. And yet," said Tracy, with firm conviction, "I am certain she likes me."

"And are things in the same state now?" inquired his friend, a look of surprise having superseded the shadowy smile.

"Yes," sighed Cuthbert; that was May, and this is October, and I am no further advanced in my wooing."

"Strange!" exclaimed Joe. "Can you account for it in any way?"

"No, I can not."

"Does Mrs. Lawless regard you with favour?"

"Something more than favour. She, I know, would willingly welcome me as a son, and Poppy as a brother. Dear little Poppy!" he added, softly, a tender ring in his tones, which was not lost upon his observant friend. "If she were older, and I had never seen Ina, she is the one I should choose for my wife. She is full of life, and fun, and spirit, a merry, laughter-loving fairy, winsome to the last degree, more easy to understand than my proud, cold, queen-like Ina."

"Do you think Miss Lawless has a lover already, Tracy? That might account for her indifference to you."

"No," he replied, reflectively. "I have not seen her show the slightest preference for any one of the men who visit at the Cottage, many of whom make no secret of being admirers. She is absolutely haughty and disdainful with them. To me she is always kind and friendly, if no more."

"And you have seen her often during these five months?"

"Nearly every day. To tell you the truth, Joe—though I am sure you'll dub me a terrible fool—I can't keep away. It's no use. I go there determined to speak out, tell her all that is in my heart, and then when I grow warm she freezes and chills me and my ardent declarations; and I feel wretched and miserable until Poppy comes with her gay laugh and merry ways, and cheers me again. Then I keep away for a while, and tell myself I won't be made a fool of. But it's all no use. In less than a week I am back again, basking in the sunshine of her beauty, hoping she will change, long for her love, sitting, metaphorically, at her feet, waiting for the change that, alas! does not come in my 'queen of hearts.'"

"Still continue to hope," said Joe, encouragingly, puffing a big cloud of smoke from his big Turkish hookah, and staring intently at a wild cat's head that hung over the mantelpiece, for, in truth, he was not a little bewildered at what his friend had told him.

Tracy Cuthbert was the last of a long race of blue-blooded Somerset squires. They had

all married rich wives, and though living in good style, keeping hounds and horses, carriages, servants, entertaining freely and giving liberally to the poor, they never outran the countess, so the last of the Cuthberts in addition to possessing the Royal, had a long rent-roll as well, and was accounted the best match in that part of the county, and the cynosure of all feminine eyes, especially those belonging to marriageable young women, or to matrons with daughters.

However, he, though six-and-twenty, had given no indications of desiring to exchange his bachelorhood for matrimony. He seemed indifferent to glances from bright orbs, and smiles from pretty lips, until Ina Lawless cast her spells around him, and bewitched his senses.

He was very handsome, had charming manners, was amiable, bright, clever. It was therefore all the more to be marvelled at, that this girl, evidently poor, and with next to no prospects should be indifferent to him, and rebuff him when he wished to assume the manner, and gain the place and rights of a declared lover and future husband.

Joe knew most of the girls going would have snatched eagerly at such a gilded bait as the master of Cuthbert Royal could offer; and he was sufficiently attractive to win love for himself, without the additions of wealth and position.

So he found the problem of Ina Lawless and her indifference to Tracy and his wealth hard to solve, the more he thought of it, the more bewildered he became and the less able to understand her motives and reasons.

"I should like to know your friends," he said, at last after a long silence.

"My friends at the cottage?" asked his host.

"Yes. Will you take me to call there?"

"With pleasure, my dear fellow. We will go to-morrow morning."

"Remember, Tracy, I am not a prospective son-in-law."

"Neither am I, Joe," replied the young man, laughingly. "Only wish I was."

"They may not care to see me early in the morning, I should not like to be met with black looks and frowns ladies don't care to be seen *en déshabillé*."

"They are always neat and tidy, and ready to receive visitors, no matter how early one goes. However, I will respect your scruples. We will go in the afternoon, Joe."

## CHAPTER II.

"Never heed! never spare!"

Never fear! never care!

It is sweeter to love, it is wiser to dare!

Lonely and longing and looking for you,  
She has woven the meshes you cannot break through,

She has taken your heart, you may follow it, too,

Up the jewelled stair, good luck to you there!  
In the crystal cave with the witch so fair!"

THE next morning Joe was awakened early by an onslaught from the brace of beagles, Bachelor and Beauty, who were privileged to be in the house, along with Orisp, the fox-terrier; Bill, the bull-dog; Rattle, the other hound, and Majestic the mastiff. The young man had taken them out for a walk the night before, and having left his door open, the animals rushed in, and jumping on the bed began to lick his face and hands, shove cold snouts into his eyes, and otherwise to show boisterous signs of friendship and a desire for further promenades in his company. Finding it impossible to dislodge the couple, who snarled at each other amiably as they disputed the honour of sitting on his head or chest, he got up, and dressing himself took them for a stroll.

As he came back he saw Cuthbert standing by the sundial in the rose garden, surrounded by a troop of dogs and Bogue, the tiger-tabby cat.



They were looking at him with eager, affectionate eyes; but he was oblivious of the canines, and with his eyes cast moodily down was tracing lines on the gravel path.

"He's got the disease pretty badly," muttered Hadfield, as he noted his friend's dejected air and attitude. "Some people say a man never gets over his first love, and there's no doubt about it that a man is never so much in earnest as he is then. Often we don't *always* mean it, and never love again quite in the same way. Hope it won't spoil his future. Don't look promising at present. Something ugly in the background, I'll be sworn. No girl in her senses, fancy free, and without any tie to hold her back, would snub Tracy Cuthbert of Cuthbert Royal, that I'm sure of. Why, most of them would give their little finger to be mistress of such a place," and he gazed round at the park and grounds, which still looked lovely though "falling leaf, and fading tree" were everywhere visible.

"Hallo! Tracy," he cried.

"Is that you, old man?" rejoined Cuthbert, leaving off tracing his circles and looking up.

"Where have you been?"

"Across the park."

"Early riser? I take it you're an appetite now?"

"Pretty well."

"Feel as though you could eat an ox whole?"

"Not quite. A grouse or a partridge would suit me better."

"That I can give you, from my own preserves, too. Come along, breakfast will be ready by the time we reach the house," and together they strolled across the trim, closely-clipped sward, lingered on the terrace a few moments, and then went into the dining-room, where a cheery log fire blazed up the wide chimney, and before which, as usual, the dogs and the cat seated themselves.

The table was profusely loaded with a variety of tempting viands. There was cold game, potted meats, salmon, stewed kidneys, eggs, delicious looking butter, rolls and scones, while tea, coffee, and claret were at the head of the table. It was a meal a poor man unaccustomed to luxury would thoroughly enjoy, a rich man appreciate, and the host and his guest did ample justice to the good fare, especially the latter, who, being fancy free and not inconvenienced by a love affair, was healthily hungry and keen of appetite.

After breakfast they had a cigar or two, knocked the billiard balls about for a little while, and then went out to the stables. But Joe saw that his friend was restless, that his eyes frequently sought the clock as though he fain would have hurried on the leaden-footed hours that must pass before he could seek the society of the girl he loved.

He was quite changed. There was little left of the frank free youth, all fun and frolic, Hadfield had known and loved at Cambridge. He was morose, less animated, seemed indifferent to most things, and looked as though some weighty care oppressed him.

"She has bewitched him," thought Hadfield, "and she doesn't mean to have him, that's evident, or she would have swallowed the golden bait ere this. I wonder what hinders her. Must try and find out. He's much too good a fellow to be thrown away and shipwrecked for the sake of a woman who, ten to one, isn't worthy of him and his honest affection."

Possessed with this idea, Joe was rather silent during luncheon, and what little conversation there was was carried on by Cuthbert, whose spirits rose as it grew near the time for him to visit his divinity. When they started to set out the six house dogs immediately got up from their position before the fire and marched after them.

"Do you mean to let all these brutes come too?" asked Joe in amazement, looking at the formidable array of tykes.

"Yes; they are as welcome as I am."

"They must be good-natured if they don't

object to a tribe of canines invading their domicile."

"They are good-natured. It's the prettiest sight in the world to see Poppy sitting on the grass with Crisp in her lap, Bill, Beauty, and Bachelor beside her, and Majeestic in front, having flower chains made for his neck. He seems thoroughly to enjoy the honour."

"And what becomes of Rattle? Is he left out in the cold?"

"Not by Poppy's wish. You know what a beggar he is for sticking to me. I positively can't get rid of him. He is like my shadow. He won't join in the games."

"Dear old chap. His love is worth having—honest and true."

"Of course it is. I am fond enough of the old fellow, only I should like him to chum with the child. It seems so ungrateful after all her pretty kindness to them."

"You seem very fond of the child," hazarded Joe, looking keenly at his friend's dark face.

"I am. She's a sweet little thing, and my sworn friend."

"I see. You hope she will help you in your wooing?"

"She may. The sisters are very much attached to each other. But I fear no one else can help me with Ina. I must stand or fall alone, as far as she is concerned."

"Well, you have my best wishes, Tracy. I sincerely hope you may succeed, as your heart is so much engaged. Good luck be with you."

"Thanks, Joe."

And then the friends walked on in silence, their feet brushing aside the fallen leaves, that lay thickly on the sward, and swaying the tawny bracken as they brushed passed it, and the pine cones, and oak apples.

"Who have you now to cure the souls on your estate?" asked Joe, as he caught a glimpse in the distance of the old grey Tudor church, partially covered with ivy and mosses and creeping things.

"Nobody at present."

"How is that?"

"The old rector, Mr. Vanburgh died, suddenly a fortnight back, and we are waiting for the new man."

"Who is he?"

"A Vanburgh, of course."

"Why 'of course'?"

"Because one of the tribe has always officiated here since my sturdy ancestor in the time of Harry the Bluff built the church. The Vanburgh of that time did him some service, and he promised him the living in perpetuity, as far as it lay in his power to give it. At any rate it has been officiated in by one of the name since that time without a single break."

"I see. But how do they manage about their creed? Are they always of the Protestant faith?"

"By no means. They change their religion, becoming Catholics, Protestants, or Puritans, much after the fashion of the Vicar of Bray, and are loyal to that faith which is supported by the Cuthberts, their patrons."

"I see," observed Joe again, a smile breaking over his good-natured ugly face; "time servers."

"Just so, and not godly men either, if one may judge by appearances. The late rector was fonder of a glass of good port or a bumper of comet claret than a clergyman need be, and preferred a spin after the hounds to delivering homilies from the pulpit, while I have heard my father say that his uncle and predecessor, was as bad a boy as ever lived. Totally unfit for Holy Orders, and only adopted the church because there was no one else to step into the Royal living."

"This promises nicely for your tenants and the people who come to St. Cuthbert's."

"Yes. Doesn't it? I hope this new fellow will be a little more reasonable, less wild, and careless of *les convenances*."

"Perhaps he will turn out to be a hot ritualist."

"Possibly. I should prefer that to his

being a downright heathen, and many of the bygone Vanburghs have been little better."

"Do you know anything of him?"

"He was at Cambridge during my first term, but left soon after, so I saw no more of him."

"What was he like?"

"Very dark; devilish-looking, black hair, black eyes, an olive skin, a great black moustache, eyebrows that arched almost into a peak, and straight, almost classic features."

"Hardly handsome?"

"Yes, he was very handsome, but in a dark, evil style. Nevertheless, the women were all mad about him, and he left many broken hearts and battered reputations behind when he left Cambridge."

"How old is he?"

"Thirty-six."

"And where has he been officiating up to the present?"

"In London first, and lately he has had a curacy at a church in Brighton, where confession and candles, and those kind of things are the go."

"Then it is a good thing for him to get the living here?"

"Yes. Five hundred a-year and a house."

"Do you mean to let him have crucifixes, candles, and confessions, and other abominations of that description?"

"Oh, I don't know," laughed Cuthbert, carelessly; "so long as the fellow isn't too popish in his practices I won't interfere. After all, what do rituals amount to? One man thinks he'll get to heaven if he has a score or so of candles on his altar and his church gorgeous with gold and velvet, and stained glass and marble pillars; another prays in a place like a barn, and vows bare humility is the only key to Paradise, while another thinks every one is lost unless they believe in eternal damnation; and so it goes on; while I believe that it is the amount of good we do ourselves that will open the golden gate for us."

"Oh, you theosophist," smiled Hadfield.

"Or philosopher, which you like best. But here we are, and there is Poppy in the garden."

They were at the gate of a neat little cottage, built in the valley, through which flowed a little streamlet, whose white walls and thatched roof were covered with the blood-red leaves of a creeper that twisted and twined round the ivy, partly concealing it.

In front was a miniature lawn, and a trifle to one side a pond fed by the streamlet, in whose clear waters some snow-white ducks were sporting themselves, diving after any small fish there might be, or hastening with flapping wings, and every sign of eagerness, to catch the crumbs the girl was throwing them.

Around blossomed lovely chrysanthemums and the late roses, but the loveliest flower of all was the girl feeding the ducks.

She had a sweet face, lit up by a pair of saucy blue eyes, full of fun and frolic, the features were small and regular, a straight nose, a red-lipped tempting mouth that seemed made for kissing, a dimpled chin, arching eyebrows, a wealth of sunny chestnut hair, that out short clustered in a bewildering mass of rings and curls that strayed lovingly over her forehead, and clung like the tendrils of a vine round the slender white throat. Her figure was full and rounded for her age, and gave promise of a glorious womanhood.

"So that's you, Tracy Cuthbert," she cried, in clear, ringing tones, tossing the whole of the crumbs *en masse* to the gobbling, clucking ducks, as she turned and greeted the visitors.

"Yes, it is I," responded the young man, smiling pleasantly, as he took both her hands in his and gave them a hearty squeeze.

"And where have you been these last two days, pray?" with a pretty, impudent, upward glance at him.

"At the Royal, Poppy. Have you missed me much?"

"The idea!" she exclaimed, with a scornful

toss of the bright head. "What will you say next? What have you been doing?"

"Entertaining a friend, an old Cambridge chum. Let me introduce him. Mr. Joseph Hadfield, Miss Poppy Lawless."

"My real name is Felicia," she informed Joe, as she gave him a little sun-browned fist to shake. "But they call me Poppy, because—"

"Because you have such a red face," put in Tracy mischievously.

"How dare you!" she cried, threatening him with the plump fist, that looked hardly bigger than a baby's. "My colour is beautiful," touching the soft cheeks, where the rich carmine, indicative of perfect health and strength, glowed. "That is not the reason," she went on. "It is because I love poppies so much, and always wear them when I can get any, and always have done so since I was a mite."

"I quite believe it," Joe assured her, soothingly. "No one but a Goth like Cuthbert could say it was because you had a red face."

"He is not always a Goth," she said, glancing at the master of the Royal, a kindly light in the saucy blue eyes.

"Thanks," smiled Cuthbert. "I am grateful for small mercies."

"You meet with big ones here," she told him, "and more than you deserve."

"Agreed," he replied, pretending to look overwhelmed.

"Only don't say I don't deserve them. It isn't kind."

"Oh! I don't want to be unkind," and again the big blue eyes were turned on Tracy, and the look was a kind of revelation to Joe.

"At any rate," he thought to himself, "if the elder sister doesn't care for him, the younger one does. She's three parts in love with him now, though she's too much of a child to know it yet. What a pity!" he added, ruefully, for already the young beauty had made an impression on him. "He can't marry both of them, and his heart seems set on Ina."

They had been traversing the lawn, and by this time had reached the house.

The door stood invitingly open, and they entered, and went into the drawing-room, where Ina and her mother were sitting.

Joe was duly presented, and struck up a brisk conversation with Mrs. Lawless, who always welcomed any man—young or old, ugly or handsome, rich or poor, warmly, seeing in them a possible means to a desired end, while Tracy sat down by Ina, and Poppy called the dogs to her and began talking to them in a grave and comical fashion, and Joe thought he answered the widow's remarks, and paid attention to what she said, yet managed to watch the young girl and the tykes, and steal several keen glances at Miss Lawless.

He was obliged to admit that he had never seen a more perfectly beautiful girl.

Her skin was just the loveliest thing he had ever looked on, and her hair was magnificent, so rich in colour, so fine in texture, so ample in quantity. If there were a fault in the face, it lay in the eyes. The colour was beautiful, and they were well shaped and placed, but the expression was cold, and there was a strained, anxious look in their blue, limpid depths which he was at a loss to account for, but which he shrewdly suspected came from some hidden sorrow. Indeed, before he took half-a-dozen glances at the girl the astute sizar concluded she was not happy, that some secret grief or trouble banished joy from her life, and shadowed it with fear.

What could it be? For his friend's sake he determined to try and find out.

In the meantime he made himself so very agreeable to Mrs. Lawless that she gave him a general invitation to come to the Cottage whenever he felt inclined during his stay at the Royal—a permission of which he was not slow to avail himself, and which somehow or

other filled his whole being with a sensation of pleasure to which he had hitherto been an entire stranger.

Poor Joe! He did not know then that he had fallen in love, that the little rosy god had smote him with one of his sharpest darts—that god who—

"Unpitted pain and toil in vain,  
That little tyrant brings;  
And those who fain would slip his chain  
Must cheat him of his wings."

That the pain of caring for one whose heart was already another's was to be his portion. A happy portion for him, perhaps, since his poverty forbid him to take unto himself a wife, and would oblige him to go single and lonely through the weary pilgrimage of life, uncheered and unblissed by smiles from sweet feminine lips, and that womanly companionship and sharing of troubles that makes many a man's load lighter, and his heart merrier, as he tramps on towards that goal whither all our feet are treading, willing or not, and whence none shall return.

### CHAPTER III.

"I have jewels and gold without measure,  
I have mountains and meadows and sea,  
I have stores of possessions and treasure,  
All wasting and spoiling for thee.  
Her heart is well worthy the winning,  
But love is a gift of the free,  
And she vowed from the very beginning,  
She'd never come over to thee."

"Two sets to love! I don't mean to play any more. It's nonsense. You two are asleep or dreaming or something or other," declared Poppy, throwing down her racket in disdain, and walking to the edge of the cliff.

It was a week later Cuthbert and his friend had been lunching at the Cottage, and after they had strolled with the two girls to the tennis ground on the brow of the cliff, which Tracy had had marked out and levelled and turfed especially for the use of his tenants at the Cottage.

It was a pretty situation. To the left was a sort of cove or cline, richly wooded, which ran down to the sea; on the right was a dense pine wood, below that the sandy cliffs clothed here and there with vegetation. At their feet lay the silvery, shell-strewn sand, and lapping it was the blue sea, over whose foam crowned billows swept and wheeled sea-mews, sand-pipers, gulls, and other wild birds, while in the distance white-winged vessels glided majestically along, and up above was a sky of almost Roman hue, so cerulean was it, and over all shone the steady sunbeams, warm and genial as though it were summer-time, investing all nature with a golden glamour, beautiful, even if evanescent and fleeting.

"Come and play with me?" said Joe, coaxingly, following her to the cliff edge, and looking down fondly at the dear little sunbrowned face, with its beaming eyes, and red mutinous lips.

"No!" she retorted, quickly. "I will not. You are just as bad, every bit."

"Why? How?" he asked in amazement.

"You only stare at me," she told him with infinite scorn and contempt.

"Well, I couldn't have anything better to look at!" he rejoined, coolly.

"There may be two opinions about that, and I don't care to be glared at as though I was some strange animal."

"Very well, childie, I won't look at you again. I'll glare at my boots."

"I am not a child," she cried furiously.

"How dare you call me one!"

"I thought you were one, as you wear short petticoats and short locks," he replied, with a tone of exasperating conviction.

"I'm not, then. I'm a—a—a—young lady."

"Really? Permit me to apologise for my mistake, *mademoiselle*. A thousand pardons."

"Oh, rubbish. Don't be absurd."

"Don't be angry, Miss Poppy?"

"Don't be stupid then."

"I don't mean to be."

"You are!"

"That is my misfortune."

"You could help it if you wished," and with a pettish movement of the shoulders she turned away and began to gather some feathery grass that grew thereabout.

In truth, poor Poppy's heart was sore. She had given it, unasked and unsought, to Cuthbert Tracy, and though she was too young to rightly understand her feelings, yet she was woman enough already to feel pained when she saw his devotion to her sister, and marked how seldom his fond eyes left the fair face, and how often his close-cropped dark head was near Ina's fair tressed one.

The world seemed all at sixes and sevens to her, and she had a mad desire to wreak her anger on some one, to be cruel, to inflict the pains she herself felt on another, and Joe was there given into her hands, as it were, to be the sport and plaything of her angered fancy.

Poor Joe! He was desperately, hopelessly, in love with this mere child, who did not, who never would, care two straws for him, who would never give a thought to the agony and sorrow she inflicted on him, who was as careless, as heedless, as a rose or a bird, or a butterfly, and as beautiful, with the fresh, fair unblossomed beauty of girlhood.

"I would help anything I could to please you," he said, a very tender look on his ugly, honest face.

"Then help those two," pointing a disdainful finger at her sister and Cuthbert, "from making geese of themselves and sitting on the damp grass."

"How shall I do it?"

"Tell them we are going for a walk."

"Tracy, we are going for a walk on the shore," shouted Joe, obediently.

"All right," replied his friend, rather glad of the chance of a *titte-à-tit* with his divinity.

But Miss Lawless rose to circumvent him.

"We will go, too," she said.

"Just as you like," agreed Tracy reluctantly.

He had hoped so much from an uninterrupted chat, he was proportionately disappointed.

However, he determined to do his best not to come up with the others, and he succeeded so well that Poppy and her cavalier got on far ahead, the child's good temper returning to her as she raced along the shore with the dogs, Joe laughing and urging them on to run races.

"Look at the effect of the sun on the sea, Miss Lawless," observed Tracy, stopping for the sixth time, "is it not splendid?"

"Yes. Very beautiful, like clusters of jewels."

"The Cuthbert jewels look like that as they lie in their blue satin casket."

"They must be magnificent."

"Some of them are fine," he replied, indifferently. "Only I don't prize them much."

"Why not?" she asked in some surprise, turning her clear eyes on him questioningly.

"In the first place, I am not a woman; I don't think men of my calibre set much store by such things."

"No. Still the associations must be interesting."

"Yes; they are somewhat."

"Are there any with historical histories?"

"Yes. There is a pendant set with black pearls, said to have belonged to Mary Queen of Scots, and clasps for a stomacher reputed to have been worn by Queen Bess."

"How interesting!"

"Then there is a hat buckle of diamonds given by Charles the Second to a Cuthbert of his time, who succoured him in his days of misfortune; a pearl necklace worn by Sarah Jennings before she became Duchess of Marlborough; and a ring that graced the hand of Queen Caroline."



"Ah, poor queen. That must be the most interesting of all your heirlooms."

"Perhaps it is. Not only because it belonged to George the Fourth's unhappy wife, but for another reason."

"What is that?" asked Ina, unsuspectingly falling into the traps he had neatly baited for her.

"My grandfather and father both used it as a betrothal ring, giving it to their promised brides until they replaced it by a plain, gold band."

"Oh!" ejaculated his companion, a tide of crimson rushing up over her fair face.

"I had hoped Ina," he went on hurriedly, seizing the opportunity, for they were practically alone on the beach, a bend of the cliffs hiding the others from them, "that one day you would wear it as a sign of a pledge between us."

"That I should!" she echoed, bewilderingly.

"Yes. Has it never struck you," he went on, taking her reluctant hand in his, "that I entertained a warm feeling for you, that, in fact, I love you? Won't you speak?" he asked, gently pressing her hands as she remained silent. "Won't you tell me if you have noticed that my affections are entirely yours?"

"Yes," she said at last, in low, constrained tones, "I feared that you did care for me."

"Feared, Ina!" he exclaimed in hurt amazement.

"Yes, feared; and I trusted by appearing not to notice your attentions that you would save yourself and me the pain of speaking."

"But the pain of silence is greater," he cried, recklessly, stretching out his arms mechanically towards her. "I must speak; I must tell you what burns in my heart like a living, consuming flame."

"Oh don't, don't," she moaned, her face very white, the strained look of anguish in her eyes deepening. "Spare me and yourself."

"I would spare you if I could, my dearest. Only I beg of you to listen to me."

"I cannot, indeed, Mr. Cuthbert."

"Do not be so cold, call me Tracy."

"Tracy," she murmured, scarcely above a whisper.

"Ah! that was delightful," he cried, joyously, lifting her hand and imprinting a long, hungry kiss on it. "What joy it would be to hear you call me Tracy every day, to have the right to call you wife, my wife," he added, lingering over the words.

"You must not!" she exclaimed, sharply.

"But if I will?" he rejoined, smiling, his arm creeping round her waist.

"I cannot allow it."

"Don't be so hard and cruel to me, Ina."

"I cruel to you!" she gasped, her eyes resting on his face with a curious look of astonishment. "Is it possible that I can be hard and cruel to you?"

"No, I don't think it is," he said, a thrill of triumph in his tones. "I don't think you could be unkind to a man who loves you as I do, the greatest ambition of whose life is to make you his wife. Ah, darling!" with a long drawn-out sigh of rapture, "how happy we shall be together! I shall envy no man when you are my bride, my wife! Wife! Is there a nearer, dearer, title on earth? If so, I will bestow it on you, Ina, my queen, my love!"

He had folded her in his arms, his eager, passionate eyes were devouring the fair face, while she rested against his breast silently, her eyes fixed on the shimmering, sun-jewelled sea. She seemed in a dream, a trance. He stooped his head, lower, lower, until his lips rested on hers in a passionate kiss.

Had it been the sting of an asp she could not have started away from him more suddenly; she absolutely tore herself from his embrace.

"Oh, what have I done? What have I done?" she cried, distractedly. "How could you? How could you?"

"Ina, my dearest!" he exclaimed, in astonishment, her agony and shame seemed so extreme. "Have I offended you? Forgive me, love. I forgot in the mad delight of holding you in my arms what I was doing. Give me your pardon, sweetheart."

"Don't call me that," she murmured, faintly, leaning back against the rocks, her face like one newly dead, her breath coming in quick, sobbing gasps.

"Why not?"

"Because—I can—be nothing—to you."

"Nothing, Ina?"

"Nothing. We must be strangers!"

"Oh! do not say that."

"I must!"

"You are cruel."

"I must be cruel to be kind. There is no alternative."

"You will not be my wife?"

"I cannot."

"Why not?"

"Do not ask me. It is impossible for me to tell you."

"I think I have a right to know."

"Then waive that right for my sake, I implore you," she returned, clasping her hands appealingly, and looking at him with dim, tear-drenched eyes.

"There is nothing I would not give up for your sake!" he said, in low, hoarse tones.

"But, Ina, what shall I do without you? How shall I live my life?"

Love is sometimes anything save eloquent. Poor Ina lifted her eyes and said,—

"I don't know. I can't tell."

"It will be a blank. Utterly spoilt."

"I would to Heaven you had never seen me!" she moaned.

"I will not say that," he replied, very tenderly. "Only I wish you could have loved me."

"It is not that I don't love you," she cried out, and then stopped short, the sickly pallor of her face turning to a bright red.

"No. Then I am not indifferent to you?"

he asked, joyfully.

"No. You are not—indifferent to me," she said, brokenly.

"Then—I shall hope," he told her, love and light and happiness once more irradiating his handsome face.

"Do not," she rejoined, earnestly. "There is no hope for either of us, this side of the grave," she added, in low tones.

"Why?"

"Don't ask me," she begged again. Then, as if moved by some strong, ungovernable feeling she clasped her hand on his arm. "Do not think that I do not share your sorrow, that I feel nothing. Some day you will know, you will understand, that if I could I would have loved you dearly," and then she turned and walked away, the rays of the setting sun shedding a crimson flash on her white dress, making it look as though dipped and drenched in blood.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"Falling leaf and fading tree,  
Lines of white in a sullen sea,  
Shadows rising on you and me;  
The swallows are waking them ready to fly,  
Wheeling out on a windy sky.  
Good-bye, my love! Good-bye, good-bye!"

"What is the matter, Tracy?"

The young men were walking back slowly, and if the truth must be told, rather solemnly to The Royal, when Joe put the question.

He did not feel as though there was much the matter with him. He felt in wildly boisterous spirits, for Poppy had been very kind and gay during that walk by the sad sea waves, and he felt proportionately elated, while his friend on the contrary, was depressed, and a dark shadow lay on his face.

"What is the matter?" he asked again.

"Everything is the matter," returned Cuthbert, gloomily, cutting at the tawny bracken viciously with his walking-stick.

"How? Is Miss Lawless cold?"

"No. Hardly that."

"What is wrong, then?" inquired Hadfield, with deep concern and anxiety.

"My dear Joe, you see before you a rejected suitor," replied his host, with an attempt at jocularity that was nothing but a miserable failure.

"A rejected suitor! You don't mean to say that you have proposed, and she has refused you?"

"That is exactly what I do mean."

"Is it possible?"

"Quite possible. Like an unsuitable manuscript, I am 'declined with thanks,'" said the young man, bitterly.

"I can't understand it."

"Can't you?"

"No. You seem to me to have everything that should make you attractive in the eyes of a woman."

"Miss Lawless is not of the same opinion."

"Did she give any reason for refusing you?"

"No; she declined to do so, and I respected her wish to be silent on that subject."

"Of course. Yet she must like you."

"She did not say she disliked me."

"Of course she didn't. She does like you. I am sure of it."

"Why?" asked Tracy, eagerly.

"From twenty different signs."

"Tell me one."

"The way she looks at you, then. No woman would look at a man who was utterly and entirely indifferent to her as she looks at you."

"I hope you are right—in fact, I believe you are. As I told you before, I am sure she likes me. After this afternoon I could almost swear she loves me."

"And—yet—she refuses you!"

"That is the extraordinary part about the matter. I can't make it out."

"Something ugly in the background, I fear, old fellow."

"I hope not; and yet when I think of the anguish and distress she displayed to-day, I fear so too, something that may wreck both our lives."

"You must only wait and hope," said Joe, encouragingly.

"Yes. But I have so little to go on for hope," he sighed; "and the future looks so empty, seems such a blank without her."

"It's a pity you didn't give your heart to Poppy," remarked Hadfield, manfully, for it cost him a good deal to suggest, even to his bosom friend that he should succeed and be beloved by the child he was so madly fond of.

"That child!"

"She will be a woman in a couple of years."

"I suppose so—and a very pretty one. Still, Ina is my choice. How I wish she would become my wife," and he sighed more heavily as he strode into the hall of his splendid ancestral home.

Never had it seemed so dull and empty to him, never had it seemed to want the tender, cheering companionship of a loving woman so much before.

The huge rooms appeared to hold such eerie shadows, such dark corners, and there was a silence in the great place that he would have preferred replaced by the musical tones of a woman's voice, the pattering of tiny feet, the ring of childish laughter.

The irony of fate is curious.

There he was, young, handsome, rich, fascinating a mate any woman might be proud of, and no doubt he might have won a bride from the flower of the nobility had he cared to try, and yet all his heart, all his hopes, were set on Ina Lawless, the penniless daughter of a linesman's widow, a girl who, saving her beauty and a certain gentle refinement of manner, had little to attract a man used every day of his life to the society of handsome, high-bred women. Only there is a mystery about love. We love, but why? is a problem not the wisest or cleverest can solve. Sometimes the object of a grand passion seems so utterly un-

worthy, or so entirely unattractive, that all who see it marvel greatly; still, there it is, and the man or woman, as the case may be, loves on, through good and evil repute, an object which others, not blinded by the rose god, regard only with horror and aversion.

"It's a pity these sort of affairs can't be undone," remarked Joe, meditatively, as they sat after dinner in Tracy's den, before a glowing fire, smoking and discussing mulled claret, while the dogs quarrelled as usual for the warmest corner, and the cat quietly took its during the scrimaging and snarling.

"I don't know," replied Tracy, with a tender smile, as he thought of the kiss he had stolen from Ina's sweet lips that afternoon; "sometimes we would not have an affair of the sort undone for anything in the whole wide world. Yes,

"And though the price be maddening pain,  
One half their raptures to restore,  
And live but half those hours again,  
I'd pay the cruel price once more."

There are always some moments, some hours, so full of delight, that the misery which follows cannot deaden the memory of them, or make us wish they had never been. You know another poet says, "Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all."

"I know, and I do not agree with him. My idea is that what you never have you never miss, and that when you have once seen a woman's face that takes your fancy, you always want to have it with you afterwards, and can't bear to be without it. At least, I can't," he muttered *sotto voce* as he thought of Poppy's bright, winsome, mischievous face, and lovely large eyes.

"Perhaps you are right," agreed Tracy, as he took a letter off the salver brought in at that moment by the butler.

"This is from Vanburgh," he remarked, after perusing it.

"Is it?"

"Yes. He apologises profusely for not arriving before last Sunday, as promised."

"Oh, indeed, it was pretty cool that. What excuse does he make for his non-arrival?"

"Urgent private affairs."

"Wonder what they were? When is he coming?"

"Next Saturday; in time to take the duty on Sunday."

"Well, that is accommodating of him, isn't it, considering that he takes his scrow from the moment his cousin ceased to breathe?"

"Very; you don't seem to like him, Joe," smiled Tracy.

"No, I don't."

"Why?"

"I hardly know. Unless it be a case of Doctor Fell, or your description the other day of his being like the devil."

"I didn't say that, did I?"

"You said he was devilish-looking."

"That is different."

"A distinction without a difference," corrected his friend.

"Perhaps you will like him better when you see him in the flesh."

"Hardly. I have an idea I shall always hate him."

"I wonder why?"

"I can't tell you. Premonition, perhaps."

"Possibly," and then the conversation drifted into other channels.

The first appearance of the new rector was looked forward to with considerable interest by all the folk who favoured St. Cuthbert's with their presence on the sabbath morn following his arrival. He had come about eight o'clock in the evening, and the only person who had seen him was his patron, Tracy Cuthbert. The clergyman came up to the Royal, despite the lateness of the hour, to pay his respects to the young man who provided him with five hundred a year and a pretty house.

Cuthbert received him with his usual easy grace of manner, but a cold shiver ran through

him from head to foot as Vanburgh's cold hand closed on his, and he experienced a curious sensation of horror and repugnance which was so strong that he found himself unable to be as cordial to his parson as he ought to have been, and he was greatly relieved when, after a short visit, he took his departure.

"Confound the fellow!" he muttered as the door closed on his retreating figure; "he gives me the shudders, and no wonder. He is sinister-looking enough for anything, and just as bad as his rascally ancestors, I'll be bound."

The next morning, there was quite a crowd at the old grey stone Tudor church. People were all anxious to have a look at the new clergyman, a chip of the old block, that so long had been among them.

All the young women had donned their best bibs and tuckers, and the matrons their gay bonnets and shawls. Mrs. Lawless was well and carefully dressed. She knew first impressions are best and most lasting, and who knew the clergyman might fancy her, and she wasn't averse to the idea of replacing the dear departed Captain Lawless. Quite on the contrary. Moreover, she was well aware the St. Cuthbert's living was worth five hundred a year, and she had been heard to say that the rectory, after the Royal, was the nicest house in the neighbourhood. So she determined to bring forth all the armoury of her weapons, and subdue this disciple of the Lord. Poppy shared her curiosity with regard to the rector, though she did not note the matrimonial intentions.

Ina showed herself absolutely indifferent; nevertheless she looked very lovely in her black dress and plumed hat if a little sad and serious, and Joe looked at her more than once in admiration, for the Royal pew was straight opposite that given up to the tenants of the Cottage, and he had a good view of all its occupants. He was looking at her when the clergyman issued from the vestry, in the wake of a train of white surplined small boys, and he saw a curious change come over the beautiful face.

Her eyes dilated and grew strangely dark, her face became very white and rigid, and the lips parting over the teeth showed them firmly clenched. For a moment it seemed to him that she lost her senses; then recovering herself by a mighty effort, she stood up with the rest, as Mr. Vanburgh began reading the service; but she looked white and shaken, and the rigidity did not leave her face, while he noticed she kept her head down and seemed to shun her pastor's notice.

"Knows the rector, or, at any rate, has seen him before," muttered sainte Joe, turning his eyes from the girl's painfully white face to the rector's dark, evil one.

He was a striking looking man, some inches over the average height. His features were as straight and regular as the Apollo Belvidere's, his olive skin and black hair giving him a somewhat foreign appearance, while his eyes—large, black, with a lurid, passionate gleam in them, overarched by black, pointed brows—gave a decidedly sinister aspect to his face.

"Not a good face," thought Joe, "and not a good man, or I'm mistaken. Wonder how he preaches?"

In that respect he did not disappoint the Sizar. He was eloquent, forcible, unsparing, but it was evident that he did not believe in much, and that the Thirty-nine Articles were not the articles of his faith.

When service was over, Mrs. Lawless lingered in the churchyard chatting to Hadfield and Cuthbert, but the former noticed Ina was ill at ease, and that she was casting anxious glances towards the door from which the rector would appear.

He came at last, and the girl turned instantly, and began to talk to Joe in hurried, broken tones.

However, she could not get out of being introduced to him. Cuthbert presented him to Mrs. Lawless and Poppy, and after a while the good lady brought him to Ina, who was standing a little apart, saying:

"This is my daughter who was at school at

Brighton; perhaps you may have seen her there," she added, with a pardonable pride in her daughter's beauty.

"Yes," said the rector, slowly, his dark and soul-searching eyes fixed on her pale, shrinking face; "I think I have seen Miss Lawless there."

But never a word said Ina. She did not even offer her hand, only bowed very stiffly and went on talking to Joe, who was making mental notes of the whole affair, and secretly pitying the girl.

Mrs. Lawless was beaming and genial, and invited all three of the gentlemen to luncheon at the Cottage, an invitation which they all accepted, Mr. Vanburgh with scarce-concealed eagerness, his eyes on Ina's face, and Joe saw it grow whiter and harder and prouder, and he manfully stayed near her, and kept the clerical wolf at bay.

During luncheon Miss Lawless maintained an almost unbroken silence, responding in monosyllables to all remarks.

Her mother looked at her rather angrily once or twice, but it had no effect, she maintained her icy demeanour, and snubbed Mr. Vanburgh unmistakably whenever he approached or addressed her.

Strangely enough, he did not seem to mind it or think it odd. He took it quite as a matter of course, and Joe, noticing it, wondered why.

"Are you still high-church in your views, Miss Lawless?" asked the rector after luncheon, when they were sitting in the cosy drawing-room discussing their coffee.

"I have no views at all now," she replied, freely.

"Indeed! You surprise me."

"Do I? I wonder at that."

"I remember you used to favour the Ritualistic church of St. Bude at Brighton with your presence and favour."

"And now I favour none. You don't ask why," she went on, recklessly, her blue eyes glittering, her fair face flushed, her whole aspect indicative of intense and barely-repressed excitement. "It is because I have discovered how hollow the whole thing is; how unworthy many of the ministers are who preach the Lord's word; how they distort and twist things to suit their own ideas; how wicked they are; how untruthful and unholy; how utterly unfit to have the cure and care of souls. It is because I know this that I do not care to go and listen to men standing up in the pulpit day after day preaching what they do not believe, telling their congregation they should live pure and holy lives, while their own are base, and vile, and degraded!"

"And yet you were at St. Cuthbert's to-day," he said, coolly.

"I went because my mother wished it, wished to do honour to the new rector. I did not know it would be you, though."

"Or you would not have gone?"

"Need you ask?" she replied with the utmost contempt and disdain.

Her look and manner were not lost upon observant Joe, who wondered what the secret was that existed between them.

He would have wondered more if he could have seen Ina that night kneeling by her bedside, her splendid hair falling in ripples of gold over her white shoulders and breast, her arms outstretched towards the Royal while she moaned,—

"Good-bye, my love! good-bye! There is no hope for us now! none! none!"

## CHAPTER V.

"Hush! A voice from the far away.

"Listen and learn," it seems to say.

"All the to-morrows shall be as to-day."

The cord is frayed, the cruse is dry;

The link must break, and the lamp must die.

Good-bye, hope! good bye! good-bye!"

The autumn days wore on, the leaves fell more thickly, and rustled as the winds blew them hither and thither; the nuts hung



ripe clusters on the hazel boughs; the mornings were misty and dewy, the afternoons short, the last of the summer flowers had faded, and only hardy winter blooms decorated the gardens, and yet the weather was so mild it might well have been mistaken for summer-tide, save for a certain lawny dreariness that was everywhere in the landscape; and told plainly autumn had come with her searing-withering touch, killing and browning all the green beauty of the foliage and grass.

Matters were not progressing pleasantly at the Cottage.

Mrs. Lawless was angered at her elder daughter's manner to her two eligible suitors, namely, Tracy Cuthbert, of Cuthbert Royal, and Arthur Vanburgh, of St. Cuthbert's Rectory, for it very soon became evident that the reverend gentleman was enslaved by Ina's charms, and oblivious, with an oblivion that was almost brutal, of her extreme and barely-concealed dislike of him.

Tracy chafed at it, but was powerless to put a stop to that which he objected to so much.

The master of the Royal never entered the Cottage now without finding his rector there.

What his poor parishioners did seemed a matter of indifference to him. He certainly neglected all his duties with a callous indifference, and was often not to the fore when he was wanted to officiate at a wedding, christening, or burial, while his sermons on the Sabbath morn were of the briefest, and he never thought of holding a second service.

Tracy chafed, but it was not at that. There were not many souls to be saved or lost in the parish of St. Cuthbert's; and there were other churches near, and clergymen more alive to their duties than was Arthur Vanburgh, whose services could be obtained if wanted.

No, he chafed because this dark, evil-looking man haunted the woman he loved like a shadow, and like a shadow seemed to darken and madden her whole life.

She grew pale and weary-looking; the orbits of her eyes hollowed, and their look grew more strained and anguished, yet she never permitted either Tracy or Joe to speak to her about the rector.

It was a mystery that neither could solve; only Joe came very near doing so one afternoon as he was hurrying to the Royal through the park, for a wonder unaccompanied by any of the dogs, who would infallibly have betrayed his presence to the two people facing each other in the dim light, "between wolf and dog," of the October afternoon.

He saw with surprise they were Miss Lawless and Arthur Vanburgh.

"When is this farce to end?" the rector was saying, in harsh tones.

"Never, as far as I am concerned," replied the girl, lifting her graceful head haughtily.

"By Heaven it shall!" cried her companion angrily. "I will not be set at defiance by you!"

"You can't help yourself."

"I can, and I will!"

"Ridiculous rubbish!"

"I will show you it is not, madame. I will assert my rights."

"You daren't!"

"I would dare anything to possess you."

"You will never do that!"

"You are very sure and bold."

"I am. I know you are three parts a coward!"

"If a man said that to me I'd knock him down," scowled the rector, the veins on his forehead standing out like cords.

"I am not a man, but you can knock me down if you like, and if the blow kills me so much the better."

"I don't want to do anything but love you, Ina," he said, very softly, taking a step towards her.

"Don't, don't!" she cried, lifting her hands as though to keep him off. "Don't talk of your love if it is profanity!"

"Do you want to drive me mad?" he asked

sullenly, stopping short at her gesture of repugnance and dislike.

"I do not care what I do so long as you keep away from me!"

"I can't do that. I hunger for a kiss, a kind word."

"How dare you speak to me like that?" she asked, scornfully.

"Who has a better right than I?" he queried, significantly.

"Any one. You have no right!"

"You have a queer notion about the law, madam."

"I know it punishes fraud," she retorted, quickly, her blazing eyes meeting his in bold challenge.

"There was no fraud," he said, shortly; though his face turned lividly pale.

"No? Then how is it you were Arthur Lister and are now Arthur Vanburgh?"

"My mother's name was Lister," he explained with some confusion.

"That gives you no right to use it, especially as you did use it!"

"I am not so sure. At any rate the tie that exists between us is just as binding."

"I will not admit that there is any tie!" she cried, hotly.

"It does not in the least matter what you admit!" he retorted, coolly. "It does not make it the less binding. You are in my power, fair Ina, and if you do not yield soon gracefully, I will go to your mother and enlist her aid."

"You will not dare!" she said, distractedly. "As I told you before, I will dare anything to gain you."

"She will not listen to you."

"I beg your pardon. Your mother will be only too happy to receive as a son-in-law the rector of St. Cuthbert's."

"You will not be that long if you dare to molest me!" she told him, the sapphire eyes gleaming like steel.

"Why?"

"Because I will tell Mr. Cuthbert that you are a shame and a disgrace to your cloth, that you are not fit to be a clergyman, and he will turn you out of the living."

"Hush!" exclaimed Vanburgh, furiously. "So you are shameless enough to speak to me of your lover—the lover who would help you to gain your ends, who would be glad to be rid of me?"

"Mr. Cuthbert is not my lover," she said, with icy pride.

"But you love him?" seizing her wrist in such a rough fashion that Joe felt inclined to spring forward and knock him down. "You love him, Ina. Don't deny it; you don't, you can't!"

"No," said the girl, calmly, with a calmness born of despair. "I will not deny it. I do love him with all my heart and soul. A worthy, honourable, upright man. It is an honour for any woman to love him."

"How dare you say that to me?" almost screeched Vanburgh, his face black with demoniacal passion. "Take care, girl, take care. Rather than see you in his arms I would kill you. Understand that, kill you!"

The last words were hissed in her ear, and then, flinging away her hand, he strode off muttering curses, and was soon lost in the deep shadow of the giant trees.

"What a brute! What shall I do?" muttered Joe. "Shall I go and offer to see her home?"

"Better not perhaps," and a minute later he saw Ina stagger away towards the Cottage, her strength seeming to have deserted her now that the ordeal was over.

Joe puzzled for many days after as to what the tie could be that existed between Vanburgh and Miss Lawless, but he could come to no definite conclusion, only he felt there was no hope for the poor girl and his friend, and he was right.

Fate was too strong, and meant to part them for ever! Some ten days later an ex-

cursion was arranged to a ruined castle almost on the sea-shore.

It was a farewell party for Joe, who was going back to Cambridge, and the spot held especial attractions in so much as that there was lying out, about a mile and a quarter across the sands, a fort, built on a rock, a wall some twenty feet high round it. At low tide it offered a tempting walk across the silvery shell-strewn strand; at high tide it was entirely surrounded, and in rough weather the angry waves would toss their frothy spume clean across the old ruin, and dash against its hoary walls with angry vehemence and rage, and beat on them as though eager to sweep away this monument of a long bygone time.

Mrs. Lawless was of the party, and of course she had invited the rector, who managed always to make himself very agreeable to her; then there were Joe and Tracy and Ina and Poppy, and three or four young people, neighbours, who were always ready for any fun and frolic.

They had a sort of gipsy luncheon in the Castle, which they all seemed to enjoy save Joe, who was in agonies, because Tracy was paying marked and lovelike attentions to Miss Lawless, which she was accepting with unworldly graciousness, while Arthur Vanburgh stood glaring at them like a fiend, an awful expression gleaming in his saturnine eyes.

Joe feeling something dreadful would happen, manoeuvred to get his friend away to the Lady Wood, where some of the young people had gone with Poppy, and left Ina with her mother to settle up the things, and get tea ready.

When the fire was lighted, and all things en train for tea, Ina sprang up on the wall to see if she could find out in which direction they had gone, for poor foolish Joe, in his endeavour to prevent a catastrophe, managed to keep their destination a secret from her.

"Where have they gone, mother?" she asked, looking down into the grassy moat, where her maternal relative was placidly watching the fire crackling and hissing.

"To the fort, of course."

"Have they? I don't see anything of them," shading her eyes with her hand, and looking across the silvery shore to the old ruin.

"They are the other side, probably."

"It seems odd, though, that I should not see any of them."

"They are there, nevertheless," replied Mrs. Lawless, with conviction. "Mr. Vanburgh told me they were going, and said he should go for a short stroll up the Clinton chine, and then return and help us with the tea."

That decided Ina. She did not stay to inquire whether it was safe to go out to the fort, whether the tide was coming in or still going out. She only realised that the man she feared and detested might at any minute return and inflict his hated society on her, while out there, in the old ruin, she had been told was the man whom, wrongly or rightly, with reason or without, she loved with all her heart and soul.

She sped swiftly over the intervening space of firm, white sand, too eager to reach the rain to notice the small dark cloud that was riding up straight towards her, or the ominous ripple on the water, that told a storm was coming on. Neither did she notice that already the tide had turned, and that the waves were creeping insidiously near the outer wall of the fort.

She went on, clambered up the slippery seaweed-covered steps, and stood on the bastion. She could not see a living creature save some gulls that circled and swept over the tumbling billows.

"Poppy, are you here?" she cried, in her clear, ringing tones; but there was no answer, only a dead silence, that, somehow or other, startled her.

Where could they be?

She ran down to the lower part, and searched every nook and corner, with the same result.

There was no one to be seen. Then she sat down, tired with her exertions beneath the great stone wall that shut out all sight of the sea and shore to rest awhile watching the gulls flying overhead, listening to their weird cry, like the howl of a banshee, or the sighing of the autumn wind, and fell to thinking of Tracy.

After awhile she awoke from her day-dreams abruptly. A dark shadow fell athwart her.

"Are you there?" she cried, eagerly, jumping up thinking it might be Poppy.

"Yes, I am here," replied a sarcastic voice that made her blood run cold, and looking up she saw Arthur Vanburgh standing above, his dark figure looming out distinctly against the sky.

"Where is my sister?" she asked, coldly.

"With your lover and the others in the Lady Wood."

"In the wood!" she ejaculated, a feeling of terror creeping over her.

"Yes."

"I thought they were here?"

"I know you did."

"You told mother they were."

"I did. But I had a motive for doing so."

"What was it?"

She asked the question firmly enough, yet her heart beat to suffocation in her bosom.

"I wanted to get you into my power, Ina."

"I am not in your power here."

"You are, come and see."

Something in his tone made her mount the steps and stand at his side.

She saw what he meant. The sea had crept up over the smooth silvery sand, and out off her retreat. A deadly sickness crept over her; sea and shore and sky became blurred into one indistinct mass, and she staggered and would have fallen but for his supporting arm.

"You understand," he said, with a fiendish smile. "We are here, they are there," nodding towards the shore, "and between us lies the sea. Already it is six feet deep around the fort, and it deepens every moment, while in less than an hour a terrible storm will be on us," pointing towards the west, where now a huge black cloud stretched pall-like across the sky, partially eclipsing the sun that was throwing a streak of lurid yellow across the horizon that was reflected in a confused line on the surging waters. "I can save you now if you will it so. I am a powerful swimmer, and can reach the shore. In a short time the current will be too strong, and the waves too high. Then no power on earth can save us, for the nearest boat is five miles off, and by the time it could reach here the hungry waters will have washed us off this wall."

"We need not stay here," she murmured, faintly, "let us stand on the bastion!"

"No, we will stay here, face to face with the death that awaits us if you refuse my terms! Shall I save you?"

"What is the price I must pay?" she asked, horror and aversion on her white face.

"Be my wife in truth as you are in name; avow openly to the world that I am your husband, your lawful wedded husband; and, moreover, give me not only a wife's duty, but a wife's love. Care for me, kiss me, love me as you did in the old days in Brighton."

"That I can never do!" she said, firmly.

"Why not?" he demanded, his grasp tightening round her waist, his face growing black with fury and baffled passion.

"Because then I believed in you, thought you honest, upright, a godly man; now I know you for what you really are: a blasphemous, a betrayer, a liar and a coward!"

"Take care!" he shouted. "Don't you fear death?"

"Not more than I do life as your wife!" she retorted, bravely enough, though the poor lips quivered painfully, and the beautiful face was pinched and blue with terror.

"Then die!" he shrieked. "Since we cannot live together, we will die together, and lie in one grave!" and twining his arms round the slender shrinking form, he sprang off the

wall into the turbulent sea, that lashed by the angry wind, seethed and boiled like a cauldron, and disappeared from sight.

A few days later some fishermen found two bodies washed ashore on the sands, five miles further down. They were those of a man and woman, and the woman was so tightly clasped in the man's embrace—crushed up against him, her long corn-coloured hair dank and dripping, tangled with weeds and sea-mosses, streaming over his breast and shoulders; her hands clenched in the lapels of his coat, her head against his arm—that it was found impossible to separate them, and they were buried in one grave.

By degrees Cuthbert and Hadfield pieced together the whole sad story, and found out how Vanburgh passing as Arthur Lister had corrupted some of the servants at the school where Ina was, and by means of forged letters purporting to come from friends of hers, had been able to get her to meet him, and at last induced her to consent to a private marriage.

Not long after their wedding she discovered the real character of the man she had so thoughtfully and hastily married, and full of horror and disgust she besought her mother to take her away from school; and as they gave up they threw their town house soon after and came to St. Cuthberts Vanburgh for a time lost all trace of his wife, and found her only by accident when he took possession of his new living.

That he loved the unfortunate girl there could be little doubt. But at best it was one of those mad, wild passions that scorch and destroy the object of them, and rather than see her live and love another man he took her life and his own, as it was worthless to him without her affection.

Cuthbert felt the blow very deeply, and went abroad for four years. On his return he visited at the Cottage once more, and let the light of Poppy's bright living eyes shut out the memory of those dear, dead ones he had mourned so deeply.

"Joe, who had taken his degree, and been presented with the living of St. Cuthbert's by his friend, who vowed he would not have another Vanburgh in the place, married them. It was a trial; yet he went through it manfully, and his congratulations were the heartiest and most sincere.

As they drove off for their honeymoon he stood on the steps beside Mrs. Lawless watching the carriage disappear in the distance and murmured,—

"The new wine, the new wine,

It tasteth like the old,

The heart is all athirst again,

The drops are all of gold;

We thought the cup was broken,

And we thought the tale was told,

But the new wine, the new wine,

It tasteth like the old!"

"God bless them. May they be happy," and then a tear stole down his cheek, and his ugly face grew sad and serious, for he knew that no wife would ever lie in his bosom, or baby lips call him "father!"

[THE END.]

A PART of Bohemia, called Egra, seems to be the only place where a wedding is not considered an occasion of rejoicing. There it would be deemed indecorous for a bride to appear in white garments, or adorn herself with jewels and white flowers. She wears her usual black dress, with a cloak of the same colour, with a rosemary in one hand, and in the other a veil with which to cover her during the ceremony. In this dismal attire she demurely proceeds to the church, attended by her relations, who preserve the utmost solemnity of countenance during the ceremony.

## HOW IT ALL CAME RIGHT.

—O—

"The great question," said Mildred, anxiously, "is, Will they forgive us?"

"And I'll answer it," said her young husband, confidently. "Yes, of course they will. Do you really suppose, Mrs. Westbrook, that the most stony-hearted parents that ever existed could possibly manage to keep up an unforgiving spirit against such an adorable little darling as you are? or against me for having had the good taste to fall in love with you?"

Thus was the conversation changed from the decidedly sensible fears for the future with which Mrs. Westbrook had begun it, to the exceedingly sentimental remarks which very young couples are apt to find much more interesting.

They were a very young couple in two ways. Young in years—seventeen and twenty-two—and young in wedded experience, for it was less than a week since the night on which Mildred March had left on the pin cushion the farewell note for her grandmother and had eloped to London with Ned Westbrook.

Of the few young men in the little Sussex village where they had met, Ned was precisely the one of whom Mrs. March—an aristocrat to her finger tips—most disapproved; while pretty, penniless Mildred, by way of set-off, was about the last person in the world whom John Westbrook—rich and proud in his own way as all the Marchs from the days of the Conquest down—would have wished his only son to marry.

For a lively feud existed between the two families—a feud which had been born of trifles, and had grown through all the years since the elder Westbrook came to Deepden, to rise from poverty to affluence by the might of his own skilful hands and inventive brain, while the fortunes of the Marchs—who had owned half the county in bygone times—were going down as rapidly as his rose; a feud which had been embittered by a hundred polite insolences, when the exclusive village society—of which Mrs. March was the recognized autocrat—began to welcome the successful man into its ranks; a feud which was only strengthened by proximity.

The terraced gardens of the great Westbrook house—a superb pile like a *renaissance* chateau, in brand new stone and brick—swept down to the edge of the grassy lawn where the old home of the Marchs stood embowered among ancient elms, whose masses of feathery foliage only revealed glimpses of the gambrel roof that had sheltered both Royalists and Roundheads in its day; and the inmates of the two could not help but meet at church and in the village, and see each other at all times and seasons.

"What is the world coming to?" sighed Mrs. March, with mild despair of the tendency of the times written in every line of her delicately refined face, as she saw Ned just from Oxford riding past on his handsome black thoroughbred, with the sunshine dazzling on his close-cut golden hair—a gallant, graceful sight to see, indeed—and attired in the very latest and most correct fashion, from the toe of his spurred boot to the top of his high silk hat. "I well remember the time, Mildred, when that young man's father was glad to earn a shilling by holding your grandfather's horse, and only look at him now?"

As her grand-daughter was still quite a stranger in the village—having only recently left the stylish boarding-school where her father had placed her shortly before his death, two years previously—Mrs. March further relieved her mind by launching out from this beginning into a history of all the various offences of the Westbrook family for the last quarter of a century.

"A pretty little thing enough," remarked John Westbrook, patronizingly, as he observed his son's blue eyes—which never hid many of their owner's thoughts—admirably following



Miss March's slim, white figure as she flitted about among her favourite flowers, watering-pot in hand, in a part of the lawn overlooked by the balcony where the two men were enjoying their after-dinner cigars in the tranquil summer gloaming—"a pretty little thing enough, but with more blue blood than money and with more pride than common sense. No, I don't know her personally, but I do know the folks she comes of, and that's more than enough for me. People with such airs and ideas have no business to live in a republic. Why, Ned, I could tell you—"

And accordingly he proceeded to inflict on his inwardly-bored but outwardly-respectful son the oft-told tale of his many disagreements with the Marchs, movingly set forth from his own point of view.

After this, the inherent perversity of youthful human nature is quite sufficient to account for the fact that Ned and Mildred began to regard each other with greater interest than before, and a little later, when their unsuspecting hostess introduced them to each other at one of the mild festivities which diversified the dullness of the village summer, he decided that she was not at all haughty and disdainful; and she, that he was not in the least vulgar. And once formally begun, their acquaintance advanced with rapid strides.

It would be hard to tell which, Mr. Westbrook or Mrs. March, was the most surprised and indignant when Master Ned sought their consent to his marriage with Millie.

For once in their lives they were of the same opinion, and that opinion was expressed in two of the most emphatic refusals that a light-hearted young lover ever received.

Thereupon followed in due course pleading, argument, defiance, elopement.

Ned had a most comfortable conviction that this last would be at once forgiven; for his father had never before refused him anything, and he was altogether too much in love to imagine it possible for any man or woman to long resist his bonnie bride.

Yet it certainly did seem to him that the "stony-hearted parents" were holding out uncommonly well.

Even on the very morning when he so airily assured his wife that they were sure of forgiveness, he had begun to grow rather anxious himself; for he had taken care to give their London address in the notes they had written jointly to Mrs. March and Mr. Westbrook just after their marriage, and ample time to receive answers had passed.

Still, he had plenty of money as yet, London had many attractions, and their rooms at a fashionable boarding-house were pleasant and luxurious, while life just then would have had charms to him on a desert island if shared with Mildred, and he had buoyancy enough to keep up the spirits of both.

That evening, however, as they were lingering leisurely over dessert in their private parlour, two letters arrived, one for each. Bride and bridegroom fairly pounced upon them in their eagerness.

"I'll give you mine in a minute, but I suppose I ought to read it first myself," observed Ned, with a fine sense of loyalty to his divided duty, as he opened his father's letter.

The rest of Mr. Westbrook's correspondents, who invariably found him brief, bent on business and "hard as nails," would have been very much astonished could they have seen any of the letters he had written his boy whenever they had been parted before—long, pleasant, entertaining letters, full of that spirit of perfect confidence and friendship which, rare and delightful as it is between men of equal age, is still rarer and more delightful between father and son.

But this letter was in a vein altogether new to Ned.

Short and stern, it coldly disowned him for his marriage, and only grew warm when it referred to Mildred and her grandmother. There, indeed, it had been written with a fluent pen, and waxed positively eloquent in its vituperation.

Ned looked up from it with a face of gloom and indignation to encounter his wife's eyes, swimming with tears, fixed upon him with a gleam of loving hope in the midst of despair.

She tossed Mrs. March's letter to him across the table with a gesture at once tragic and appealing.

"Read that," she said, her voice broken with sobs in spite of all her efforts to steady it. "Grandma won't forgive us, and she casts me off forever—and she says the most cruel things about you—and—and your father! And I know she did love me dearly, and that I've made her feel dreadfully herself; and—what—shall—I—do?"

What she did was to sink helplessly into the nearest chair, and hide her face in both hands and cry.

Ned strode hastily round to her, dropped on one knee by her side, gathered her forlorn little figure in his strong arm, and, holding her close to his heart, did a devoted bridegroom's best to console her.

He was soon so successful that she raised her head from its resting place on his broad shoulder, and nestled her cheek close to his caressingly.

"How good you are to me!" she murmured, regarding him with a tender admiration. "I won't cry—I won't care for anything else in the world while I have you; and your father shall be mine, too!"

"That's just what he positively declines to be!" groaned poor Ned. "My dear, my dear, he's cast me off quite as completely as your grandmother has you! He's a man of his word, is the governor, and he'll not change. We have nobody but each other now, little wife; but I feel rich so."

He had expected that Mildred would be reduced to despair by this disclosure; but, womanlike, knowing the worst and finding that her husband was as unfortunate as herself, she at once crushed her own grief out of sight and became the sweetest of comforters to him—a proceeding which added fuel to the fire of what he thought his just indignation.

"The idea," he growled to himself (he could not relieve his mind to her, for he would not hurt her feelings by letting her know all his father had written)—"the idea of the governor's calling her a mercenary little fortune-hunter, when she never even thinks of his money—only for the difference its loss makes to me! It will be strange if I can't take care of myself and her, too, I think. And he's sure Mrs. March plotted and planned to bring about the match, is he? I wonder what she has to say on that subject? I may as well read her letter, I suppose, since Millie gave it to me."

He did read it, and it by no means tended to soothe his temper.

Its tone was very calm, very proud, very polite. It was "written in cream—of tartar, and oil—of vitriol."

It was such an epistle as only a deeply-offended lady can produce, and was even more irritating than Mr. Westbrook's, as the light, stinging flick of a silken-lashed whip across the face is yet more insulting than a sledge hammer blow.

Ned laid the two letters side by side on the writing-table, and stood looking thoughtfully down upon them.

He was boiling with rage against the man who had insulted his wife, and the woman who scorned his father and himself; but he was outwardly very quiet.

"If the one were any man but my father, I could at least have the gratification of giving him a sound thrashing; and the other is an old woman, and my wife's grandmother, which is worse," he told himself, helplessly. "I can't do anything—can't even answer them as they deserve! I wish they would just say all those things to each other, though. But they never will; for the governor is too much of a gentleman to quarrel with a woman face to face, and Mrs. March wouldn't speak to him even for the pleasure of giving him a piece of her mind. It's a pity they can't

know the good opinion each has of the other; and, especially, that she can't know how utterly he thinks I threw myself away by marrying Millie, and he what a *mesalliance* Millie made according to her grandmother's ideas. It would be some comfort if they could only see each other's precious letters. And they shall!"

He smiled vindictively at the thought which struck him.

A little later, having easily obtained his wife's permission to dispose of her letter without explaining what he meant to do with it, he had enclosed his father's missive to Mrs. March, and *vice versa*, sending with each a most respectfully-worded note, to the effect that he trusted they might find it a satisfaction to see that his marriage was equally condemned by both, and that, though it was a grief to his wife and himself that neither of their relatives would forgive them, yet they were happy with each other, and felt no fear in depending on themselves for the future.

He was still enough of a boy to keenly enjoy his own mischief, and he whistled gaily as he went back to his rooms after dropping the two letters into the mail-chute in the corridor.

"But with the morning cool reflection came," and in the course of the next three days Ned gained a realising sense of a side of life he had never before deigned to consider.

The prosaic, world-old questions, "What will ye eat? and wherewith shall ye be clothed?" forced themselves rudely upon his attention.

Not that his money was exhausted yet, or the pinch of poverty felt; but the prudent instincts of his father woke within him, and urgently demanded to know how he proposed to support the girl he had persuaded to leave her home and cast her lot with his.

Had it not been for her, he might have gone on in happy carelessness till his funds ran low, but the thought that she was dependent upon him roused him to a sudden knowledge of a man's duty, and the dignity of a man's true place in this work-a-day world.

Hitherto he had known no more of such stern realities of life than Mildred herself. Now, confronted with the necessity of making his own way without the fortune or the powerful friend he had cast aside, he learned, as one does learn things when too late, the value of the pleasant years he had trifled away.

Money had been freely lavished on his education, and he was neither idle nor ignorant, but, like many others, he had never learned any one thing that men need to have done or taught so thoroughly that he could live by it.

Training, special skill, technical knowledge were demanded everywhere, and he had none of these.

He could get no situation of any sort. Full of life, strength, energy, he seemed to himself to stand a helpless good-for-nothing in a world of strangers, among whom he could make himself no place.

It is the oldest of stories, the commonest of experiences, but it comes upon every one who lives it with the shock of a special revelation.

Why had he not fitted himself for something? Ned inwardly inquired, with bitterness of spirit. Every avenue of success had been open to him, but he had not cared to enter any. He had never even thought of choosing a profession; he had altogether disdained to take a place in his father's business, as the latter had wished him to do when he left college.

And with the memory of his father's wishes and plans for him came a remorseful realization of the love which had made the world so smooth to him, and which, as so many others have done, he had often carelessly disappointed, and had never valued at its worth till now that he had lost it.

But for the fear of being thought moved by mercenary reasons, he would have written his

father such a letter as would have rejoiced the stern, lonely man's heart; but that fear kept him from doing anything which might seem like a plea for reinstatement.

Those three days changed him more than as many years might have done, yet there was little change to be seen.

He kept his new thoughts to himself, for he would not say anything to Mildred which might make her fear he regretted their marriage, and he was resolved not to trouble her with his anxieties about money till he must, as he thought she already had troubles enough of her own.

With the deepening and strengthening of his character by pain, a still greater tenderness had been blended with his love for her.

And, indeed, Millie, in her different way, was almost as sad and remorseful as Ned.

Love has its own rights and laws, as lovers reason, but there are so many sorts of love, and it is not well if the new, imperious passion of youth is to make one impatient and hard and disloyal to the poor, neglected, well-meaning kindred love which has wrapped one round with an atmosphere of care and kindness since life began; and, in spite of all Ned's efforts at consolation, his runaway bride could not help feeling this.

Meantime, outwardly, their life flowed on much as before. They had not even left the hotel—Ned having at first paid for some time in advance—when, on the afternoon of the third day, a visitor arrived.

Mildred was alone in the parlour when she heard a knock at the door, and in answer to her invitation to enter there appeared, not the servant she had supposed was outside, but, without card or announcement, her father-in-law himself!

She sprang to her feet in surprise, mingled with absolute fear, and stood silent, a small, shrinking figure, in her pale, rose-coloured tea-gown, looking at him with wide, wondering dark eyes.

"Where's my son?" brusquely inquired Mr. Westbrook, himself rather at a loss alone with this dainty little lady.

At the question the young wife recovered herself.

What did this dreaded personage intend to do to Ned?

She drew herself up with much dignity, though her lips were quivering like the leaves of a wind-stirred rose.

"My husband has gone to the city," she said, with a sly pride; and then suddenly her voice broke into an eager little cry, "Say anything you like to me, Mr. Westbrook, but please don't scold him. He is so good and kind, and so unhappy now because you won't forgive him."

"I don't come to scold either of you," answered Ned's father, and made an awkward pause.

It was not as easy as he had thought to tell this flower-faced, clear-eyed girl the reason of his coming.

Her grandmother's letter had roused him to such a pitch of wrathful generosity, that he resolved to at once forgive the young couple for the express purpose of showing Mrs. March whether or no Mildred had made a *mésalliance* in marrying his son.

He would push Ned forward in public life and in society; he would buy Millie the costliest trousseau and the most magnificent diamonds to be had; and he would bring them both home in triumph to display before the eyes of Mrs. March, and crush her disdainful pride by the sight of the power and the splendour of his wealth.

But now the sarcastic speech he had carefully prepared wherewith to explain all this to the scion of the Marches slunk out of his mind; and there came instead a swift memory of the pretty golden-haired girl who had loved him in his youth and poverty, had kept his courage up by her own firm faith in him through all the weary years of his fight with fortune, and had died just when the tide of success at last set toward him, leaving him the little

child for whom she had given her life, and who had grown into the man that this other girl-wife was defending with such proud and loving eyes.

He took a step towards her, his own shrewd, hard grey eyes softening.

"I came to forgive you both," he said, the roughness of his face and ways tempered by just the same natural, deferential gentleness towards womanhood that was the underlying charm of his handsome son's perfect manner. "Will you forgive me, my dear, for not realizing before what a sweet daughter Ned has given me, and how much need I have of you at home?"

That she forgave him immediately, that she sang the praises of his son to him and he to her, that they were upon the most friendly and confidential terms in five minutes, was all what any one might have expected.

But what certainly neither of them expected was that when Ned returned, and, eagerly throwing open the door, paused in mute amazement on the threshold, he was accompanied by an old lady, small, slender and erect, with bright dark eyes and snowy hair.

"Mr. Westbrook!" she exclaimed.

"Mrs. March!" literally gasped that gentleman, in the same second.

A little while before, Ned, whom business had taken to Victoria Station, had encountered Mrs. March in the crowd pouring out of the carriages.

She was tired, and felt strange and lonely and at a loss in the great, bustling city, after her years as the autocrat of the quiet little Deepden.

Even if she had not come on purpose for a reconciliation, she would have been heartily glad to see any human creature she knew; and while he hesitated whether or not to venture on speaking to her she greeted him most cordially.

She glossed over their quarrel with fine tact and discretion. She was kind, friendly even maternal, and she was altogether too wise to inform the mystified young man of her reason for thus suddenly "going to see her grandchildren," as she prettily expressed it.

Great was his secret remorse as he thought of the insulting letter his father had written him and he himself had sent to this gracious lady, for little did he dream that that same letter had been the motive power which impelled her forgiveness.

As one nail drives out another, so did her indignation at the elder Westbrook drive out her anger with Ned.

She mercenary! she angling for that ex-mill-hand's money—she, a Pensonby by birth and a March by marriage!

She fumed and raged in solitude, withheld by the restraints of sex and good breeding from the fiery retort she would have liked to send her neighbour. And at length there dawned upon her the idea of a practical retort, giving the lie without words to all Westbrook's imputations.

On these thoughts intent, she had come to London; but somehow, under the spell of Ned's frank face, and the tender, practical way in which he took possession of her, and relieved her of the small burden of her shawl and catebel, and gave her his arm, and escorted her through the crowd she had rather dreaded, and helped her into a hack, a change came o'er the spirit of her dream.

It was pleasant, after all the years she had depended on herself, to have this feeling of being taken care of again. It seemed almost like the old times, when her own son was alive and with her.

And, then, the young fellow was so handsome and manly and well-bred, so attentive to herself and so evidently devoted to her Millie, that, as their conversation grew confidential during the drive to the boarding-house, she felt that she could be very honestly fond of him, and her small revenge upon Mr. Westbrook gained a sweetness not meant by the old saying.

But to meet the man himself *tête-à-tête* with her own darling!

Amazement is altogether too weak a word to describe her feelings and his, as they silently confronted one another after those first impressive exclamations.

For a long moment each regarded the other very much after the fashion of a strange cat and dog, who suddenly meet and are uncertain if it is best to fight, fly or make friends. Then—they made friends.

How they did it, none of the four could have told except Mrs. March, who had realized and gracefully accepted the situation, while the others still stood tongue-tied and helpless.

No one could less have understood how the event came about than did Mr. Westbrook himself; but before many minutes had passed he was set quite at his ease and was chatting pleasantly with his ancient enemy, who made no allusion, then or later, to either of the two letters which had worked this wondrous change.

Nor did this change continue to be merely on the surface; for, much to the delight of Ned and Millie, with the growth of their acquaintance, mutual respect and regard grew between the two proud, strong-willed people, whose natures had a certain likeness in spite of all the differences which they learned to tolerate in each other.

If anything had been needed to complete Mr. Westbrook's happiness in regaining his son, with the addition of a dearly-loved daughter-in-law, it would have been the interest in business affairs which marriage developed in Ned; while Mrs. March consoled herself for this low taste in that otherwise admirable young man by reflecting that in these degenerate days even the English aristocracy themselves have taken to trade.

## FACETIÆ.

"THEY belong to a different set," as the maiden lady explained when a friend noticed the difference between her upper and lower teeth.

TURBS: "I flatter myself that honesty is printed on my face." Grubbs: "Well—yes, perhaps—with some allowance for typographical errors."

MISS BROWN: "I did not know you used trains much, Mrs. Silvergilt. I thought your husband kept a carriage." Mrs. Silvergilt: "Yes, dear, he does, he keeps it in the coach-house."

VISITOR (to butler, who is showing him through the picture-gallery of his old mansion): "That's a fine portrait. Is it an old master?" Butler: "No. That's the old missis."

"I AM on my way home, doctor," said a citizen, who was after some free advice; "and I'm tired and worn out. What ought I to take?" "Take a cab," replied the intelligent physician.

AN Irishman getting on a high-mettled horse, it ran away with him, upon which one of his companions called to him to stop him. "Arrah, honey," cried he, "how can I do that when I've got no spurs?"

IRISH teacher (who has found supposed caricature of himself on slate), "Now, sir! This is your slate, sir! What is this intended for, sir?" Boy: "Please, sir, I dunno who done it, sir! Looks to me like a monkey, sir!"

"JOHN," said Mrs. Hawkins, as they were going home from church, "why did the minister call the dove that brought back a green twig to the ark 'he'?" "I don't know," replied John, "unless it was that if the dove had been a female she couldn't have kept her mouth closed long enough to get the bough to the ark;" and there was ill-feeling in that household all the rest of the day.



## SOCIETY.

THE majestic ceremony of the Garter at Windsor was described by the Shah in his diary as the presentation of "a long stocking tie."

THE Princess of Wales, it is said, has decided to have everything for the trousseau of the Princess Louise made in the United Kingdom—giving Ireland a fair share of the work.

THE series of names possessed by a recent arrival in England, the young heiress presumptive to the Crown of Hawaii. Here they are in full: Victoria Kawakani Lunaliio Kaulani Kalani-niu-ahi-lapa-lapa. The poor girl's mother is dead, and she has been sent over here to be educated.

AN appropriate scarf-pin for the yachting season is in the shape of a gold steering wheel studded with pearls. A dainty requisite for the smoking-room is a pretty miniature street lamp of silver, supplied with all the necessary attachments.

THE favourite London christening robe is of valenciennes insertion and open embroidery in alternate stripes over deep cream satin. The robe is deeply pointed around the bottom and has bows of cream moiré just over each point; the puffed sleeves have moiré ties and there is a many looped sash of the same narrow moiré-ribbon.

SUPPLIES of fruit and flowers are being constantly sent to the Queen from the Royal gardens at Windsor. During the summer Her Majesty always has fruit upon the table at every meal, and never fails to take some. A curious fancy of the Queen's is to eat powdered cinnamon with almost everything to which it can reasonably be applied. But, as it is an acquired and somewhat exceptional taste, the cinnamon is served in a pretty silver double dish, the other half containing powdered sugar. This dish was given to the Queen by the Duke of Connaught, and figures daily upon the Royal table, wherever the Court may be.

A YELLOW garter presented by a girl who has been engaged while wearing it possesses a double charm, and it is quite the proper thing for a bride to present to her favourite bridesmaid the garter she herself has worn. At a recent wedding the bride tossed her bouquet of white roses to the first bridesmaid as she entered her carriage after the ceremony, and the stems were found to be tied with a yellow garter, clasped with silver.

SPREADING of the Prince of Wales an American newspaper man now in London says: "Personally there is not a better fellow walking on Broadway. He is an all-around man, and his accurate knowledge on all sorts of subjects is simply phenomenal. Talk with him on yachting, hunting, sport of any kind, the theatre, current literature or art, and he is thoroughly posted. Home and foreign politics he has at his fingers' ends, and he knows what is going on all over the world. He would make an ideal editor. He's an indefatigable worker and he'd be a whole staff in himself."

"The question is often put to me," said a lady whose opinion in matters of etiquette is wholly competent, "whether it is ever permissible to take a young lady's arm in acting as her escort on a promenade after nightfall. Unhesitatingly and peremptorily, no. Not after nightfall, nor by daylight, nor at any other time. An invalid may lean upon a young woman's arm; a grandfather if he is infirm may avail himself of a similar support, and a London policeman seems to have acquired the right to propel his charges across the thoroughfares by a grasp upon the arm, but these are the only male persons so privileged. For an acquaintance, a friend, or one who aspires to a still nearer place, to take the arm of a young woman when walking with her on a public highway is inexcusable."

## STATISTICS.

THE deepest coal pit in the world is said to be the St. Andre in the Charleroi (Belgium) district. It is 3,084 feet deep.

THE gold coinage of Great Britain is estimated to consist of not less than seven hundred tons of an alloy of gold and copper.

LONDON has twenty-nine vegetarian restaurants, the staple articles of whose bill of fare are the cereals, the legumes, such as peas, beans, haricots and lentils, and various kinds of fruit.

FRANCE continues to become like England, more and more dependent on the foreigner for its wheat supply. Last year she imported over 1,000,000 tons more than in 1887, at an increased outlay of £7,200,000.

## GEMS.

How many people would be dumb if they were forbidden to flatter themselves and slander others!

SELDOM ever was any knowledge given to keep, but to impart. The grace of this rich jewel is lost in concealment.

INEXHAUSTIBLE good-nature is one of the most precious gifts of Heaven, spreading itself like oil over the troubled sea of thoughts, and keeping the mind smooth and equable in the roughest weather.

PEOPLE who have no occupation must worry. The human heart is like a millstone—if you put wheat under it, it grinds the wheat into flour; if you put no wheat, it grinds on, but then it is itself that wears away.

AN obtuse and stolid adherence to things as they are should never be dignified by the name of loyalty. If no one changed his ideas or methods, if no one lifted his thoughts or his conduct from a lower to a higher plane, the world would stand still, and stagnation would ensue.

IT used to be said that he who made a blade of grass to grow where none grew before, was a benefactor to his kind. In the near future, it will be said, in civilized countries that he who takes away a single anxiety from the mind of over-burdened man is a friend to the race. It is wonderful what brave men can do and endure if they have intermediate periods of complete rest and quiet.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHOP up two calves' feet, and let them simmer in two quarts of water for one day, then strain them, take off the fat, and add the thinly peeled rind of one lemon, the juice of three, some cloves, a little mace, half a tumbler of brandy, and the whites and shells of three eggs. Then whisk it quickly on the fire till it boils, and pass it, till it is quite clear, through the jelly bag, which must be placed in front of the fire. Put it in a mould and let it set. This makes about one quart.

PICKLED SALMON.—Take three pounds of salmon, scale it, and rub well with a cloth. Scrape away all the blood about the back-bone but do not wash the fish. Cut it into outlets an inch thick; then let it simmer for one hour in the following pickle:—One pint of vinegar one pint of water, six cloves, three blades of mace, one teaspoonful of whole mixed peppercorns, one teaspoonful of mustard tied in a muslin bag, and salt to taste. Skim carefully while the fish is simmering. When done remove the fish, and pour the liquor into a jar or basin, so that both may get cold. As soon as cold, place the fish into the liquor with half-a-pint more vinegar and some whole allspice. Garnish with bay-leaves.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

A WOMAN and her husband are master and engineer respectively of a trading steamer on the Columbia river, Washington.

Just two living women, Queen Margherita, of Italy, and Mrs. Bonanza Mackay, are lucky enough to own gowns embroidered with real pearls.

ONE of the "sure cures for consumption sold in Philadelphia was analyzed the other day and found to consist of rum, molasses and extract of dandelion.

A room with a low ceiling will seem higher if the window curtains hang to the floor. Lambrequins may be used to extend the curtains to the ceiling, and thus carry out the effect.

It is announced, on high scientific authority that the bicarbonate of soda which is used as a preservative of milk forms a compound—the lactate of soda—which is particularly injurious to children.

PRINCE FERDINAND of Bulgaria, who is an ornithologist, has reported that enormous flocks of rose-coloured starlings have appeared in his dominions. They come from Asia and Africa, and have not been seen in Europe since 1876.

In these days of advanced science the Ethiopian can change his skin. Many successful experiments have of late been made in the grafting of the skin of whites upon blacks and vice versa, but the transplanted skin invariably changes to the colour of its new wearer.

THE ancient Egyptians have never been equalled for their skill in the manufacture of perfumes. Some of their ointment preserved in an alabaster vase in the museum at Alnwick has been recently smelt and found to still retain a pungent odour, although its age cannot be much less than 3,000 years.

HONEY eaten freshly on bread before retiring is recommended as a cure for insomnia. It is probable that jelly or simple bread and butter would be equally efficacious, as a light lunch just before retiring will induce sleep when nothing else will. There can be nothing better for such a lunch than bread and honey.

To a European, the most novel thing in Edison's exhibit in the Paris Exhibition, is the ingenious method of train telegraphy, which is in practical use in America, though not yet introduced here. By it, messages can be dispatched from an express train running at full speed, through the ordinary wires at the side of the track.

In Berlin a workman employed in a chemical factory having been told that sulphonal is a soporific, and wanting something of the kind for his wife, determined to try it on himself first. He took thirty grammes and slept for ninety hours, and after a short interval of wakefulness, slept again for twenty-four hours, without experiencing any ill effects.

FOR sweeping carpets there are few things will take up the dust as thoroughly as dampened newspaper. First wet the paper thoroughly, then squeeze out as much of the water as possible. Pick the damp paper into small bits, and scatter over the carpet to be swept. These particles of paper, when sweeping, will collect the dust and prevent it flying about the room.

HAIR-DYING is becoming general among the labouring people of England—not from motives of vanity, but under the spur of necessity. Working-women, and even men, it appears, are given to decorating themselves in this way as a matter of necessity, and in order to earn their living. Gray hair looks aged, and suggests inefficiency; or perhaps it does not, for some other reason, satisfy the fancy of critical customers; consequently it is not in favour with employers. Hair-dyeing has therefore become an established custom among persons seeking employment.

# NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**F. H. I.**—Declined with thanks.

**K. C.**—We do not know of any such company.

**WILLIE'S WIFE**—Portiere means the curtain that hangs in a doorway, and is pronounced por-tay-ayr.

**LITTLE**—If you have passed twenty-seven, you are in your twenty-eighth year until your next birthday.

**H. M. N.**—1. See answer to "Musclian." 2. You write a very legible hand; a little steady practice will improve it very much.

**LADY JOAN**—The summer stocking par excellence is of fine black Hile thread, with toes, heels and upper half of the leg all in white.

**MUSICIAN**—The only way to destroy superfluous hair without resorting to depilatories, which are all dangerous, is to pluck out the hair as it grows.

**ONE IN TROUBLE**—The police will be much more likely to help you than thought readers; you will not find the latter any use in the discovery of the thief.

**M. R. BOSTON**—Flowers may be sent to anyone without offence, though it is hardly usual for ladies to send bouquets to gentlemen, except in illness or under some exceptional circumstances.

**DISAPPOINTED**—If a woman may believe less of what a man tells her before marriage, and more of what he tells her afterwards, the wedded state would be a much more harmonious affair.

**W. WILLMAN**—1. The right hand. 2. There is no special meaning. Such trays are common; they are three, presumably, "lucky" cards. 3. The Britannia will seat the largest number of persons.

**LOVED AND LOST**—Pluck up a spirit and forget him; he is not worth your sorrow. Probably the whole thing was planned before you went to his home. It was an easy way of getting out of an affair he was tired of.

**BRUCE**—1. Unable to enlighten you. 2. An ordinary bow, or bending of the body, is all that is required, except under peculiar circumstances, when the kind of bow, or courtesy, which you describe may be made. 3. We presume so.

**G. W. MARCH**—Boots do not generally squeak after they have been wetted. There is no actual remedy, though we have seen oil applied to the edges of the soles with a view to preventing the annoyance. It will go off as the boots wear.

**ANABELLE**—A style of evening coiffure has been introduced that is simply a revival of 1866. Just like the heads in fashion magazines of that date. A deal of hair is piled on the top of the head and plenty more hangs down at the back.

**BLUSH ROSE**—1. Girls of fifteen should not want anything to colour their lips or make their eyes bright; a healthy girl needs no such aids to her personal attractions. 2. The writing is very childish; it should be better if you have had any education.

**BLANCHE**—A young lady with such good looks and such evident strength of character need not fear much even in such a position as yours. You will find that our advice to you is worth following, and we are glad that you have already proved our words to be rational and practical.

**QUEENIE**—You will only rush into misery by leaving him. You may claim a judicial separation, but we advise you to attempt to cure him. Sometimes a single fortunate word changes a man's life. We are deeply sorry for your suffering, but you can do no good by throwing away your livelihood.

**ONLY A FRIEND**—We should certainly advise you to pause before going out to California unless you have some situation secured before you start. It is no place for girls without some friend to guide them. 2. It is impossible to answer any question concerning the cost of a Chancery suit; the end of it will show.

**MRS. LEMARD**—Unless gloves are chosen to match the toilette, black, tan, and grey are the colours mainly in demand. The green shades are rather striking, the most artistic being those in sage or olive tints. Loose-wristed gloves, without buttons, are liked for travelling or shopping wear, and the gauntlet is once more to the front.

**ANNIE**—There is an old saying to the effect that "If you rock an empty cradle you will rock a new baby into it." This is difficult of explanation by any other reason than that of coincidence. The expectation of an addition to the family naturally causes the production of the cradle, which has been stored away previous to that expected occurrence.

**FARMER'S BOY**—You can do no good on one of the ranches unless you can ride; and we fancy from your letter that your ability in that line is not great. Take rough clothes, Norfolk jacket, plenty of leather gaiters and cords. Use only woollen shirts loose at the collar, and be prepared for dirt of the most appalling description. As soon as we know about your horsemanship we will give you as full a guide as our space will allow.

**JACK**—It is not in accordance with polite usage for a young man to send his card to a lady (even if she may want to see him) before he has been introduced to her. But if he calls at her house, it would be proper, and according to custom, for him to hand his card to the servant to give to the lady. A mere blunder in such a matter would not, however, be an affair of any great importance, and would be readily overlooked by a lady of thorough breeding.

**D. DEVENISH**—For the Life Guards the limits of age are eighteen to twenty-five years, and the minimum chest measurement is 33 inches; the height from 5 feet 8 inches and upwards.

**J. W.**—Blood-shot eyes are generally the result of a cold or weakness. For both a weak bath of whisky and cold tea will prove beneficial. Vary this by wetting the eyelids with rose water. Your writing says you are gentle and even-tempered.

**POPPY**—Under the circumstances, the gentleman acted in a perfectly proper manner. He acted as your escort to the entertainment, and you behaved in a very unladylike manner in accepting the escort of another after the concert was over.

**BERTIE**—Let the matter drop, and give the indignant fair one an opportunity to cool down and reflect. It was, of course, a very absurd thing for her and the other girls to take such mortal offence at a bit of pleasantry. If they do not all get over their wrath in time, we should think that you might well "wink and blink like a toad in surprise."

**T. H.**—According to the *Spectator*, Tobias Hobson was the first man to let out hackney horses. It appears that he was a very eccentric old gentleman, and when a customer came for a horse, he was taken to the stable, where there was a good choice, but was forced by Hobson to take the animal next to the stable door. By this method everybody was equally well served according to his turn; and it became a proverb, when anything was forced upon you when it ought to have been your choice, to say, "Hobson's choice."

**J. GOULD**—According to *The Field*, the possible length of the life of a horse is far beyond the average duration of it. A horse fifteen years old is usually accounted of little value, and, as a rule, it would be difficult to give away the survivor of eighteen or twenty years. But a horse's useful life extends to thirty or forty years, and if the animal is used with care it may do valuable service during all this long term. It may be noticed that all the recorded instances of the death of very aged horses go to show that their lives were shortened by some mischance, and not by old age.

## A GUEST DIVINE.

ONE must not reckon love  
By what it brings  
Of earthly good and gain.  
The blue bird sings  
From out his joyous heart,  
Nor stops to ask  
What payment it will bring—  
A fruitless task!

Love that is worth the name  
Gives payment rare  
Just by its presence, sweet  
Beyond compare.  
To love without return  
Is not a woe,  
For such a heavenly guest  
Will overthrow  
Our baser self, and shed  
Effulgent light  
O'er all the springs of life,  
And make them white.  
Love is its own reward,  
And pays in gold  
That tears can never dim,  
Nor time make old.

M. M.

**FANCIER**—Most birds have a small gland from which oil is squeezed out with the bill and spread over the feathers, thus enabling them to shed water.

**HOTSBEMID**—A good protection of polished steel from rust is warm paraffin, which should be well rubbed on and then wiped off with a woollen rag. It will protect the surface better than any varnish.

**C. J.**—Paul Revere, the American patriot, was born in Boston, January 1, 1735, and died there May 10, 1818. He was of Huguenot descent, and was taught his father's trade of goldsmith. In later years he became an expert copper-plate engraver.

**J. SAND**—Magna Charta, the Great Charter, was a constitutional instrument executed by King John of England, intended mainly for the nobles and landholders, but it embraced in its terms all freemen. It has been called "The Key-stone of English liberty."

**VANA**—It is the general belief among medical men that it is not advisable for a child to sleep with an aged person. Had your little girl not slept with her grandmother during the last eighteen months she might not now have had such a delicate constitution, but been robust and vigorous.

**AUST. HEPHEZIBAH**—If it is necessary for you to use oil on your hair, we recommend, as a substitute for the wax and oil referred to, castor oil and brandy, in the proportions of three ounces of oil to one of brandy. Rub a little of the mixture well into the roots of the hair about twice a week.

**IVA**—1. A wedding-ring is a plain gold band of varied thickness, according to the taste of the wearer. An engagement-ring may have a setting of any precious stone, but those containing diamonds—in solitaire or cluster—are the most fashionable. 2. According to the latest dictates of Dame Fashion—a most fickle individual—the engagement-ring is to be worn on the third finger of the left hand, the same as that upon which the wedding circle is placed.

**Q. I. O.**—The term "mugwumps" is, we are led to believe, of Indian origin, and signifies a chief, a noble. It is applied to that class of independent voters who have become more or less distinguished in the world of letters. The word is pronounced as spelled, with the accent on the first syllable.

**BESSIE LEE**—Two sisters might, with propriety, write to a gentleman to congratulate him on his birthday, and sign both their names to the letter, of course enclosing it in a single envelope. Write kindly, and express some affectionate wish for his future happiness and prosperity. Your writing is too small to be fashionable.

**VANBURN**—It is thought by some that the pistol was so named from the city of Pistoia, Italy, where pistols were first made; but others think the word was derived from the Latin *pestillum*, pestle, because the first pistol looked much like the pestle of a mortar. The word pistol was used by Shakespeare in 1599 and 1600, but there is nothing in its employment by him to show that it meant a firearm.

**J. DAVIS**—The history of Canada is that of its constituent provinces up to 1867, when the present federal union was effected. Manitoba, and the North-west Territory were admitted in 1870, the Dominion Government having purchased from the Hudson's Bay Company its former governmental rights over those regions. British Columbia entered the Confederacy in 1871, and Prince Edward Island followed in 1873. We have not the space in which to give the principal events in the history of Canada, but will refer you to any standard encyclopedia.

**MASIE**—What you ask about is only the old saying, "Cats suck the breath of infants and so kill them." In fact, cats like a warm place. What better nesting place than the baby's cradle? Still, this preference on the part of poor pussy is frequently a cause of serious inconvenience to her, for, having established herself close to the baby in the snug warm cradle, she finds herself ignominiously hustled out the moment her presence is discovered. It is true that cats may cause the death of a child, suffocating it by lying across its little chest, or that this may cause permanent weakness of the respiratory organs.

**F. P.**—Robin Adair, made famous by the beautiful song bearing his name, the words of which were composed by the daughter of the Earl of Albemarle, Lady Caroline Keppel, was a real flesh-and-blood individual. Nothing positive is known concerning the exact date or place of his birth, but he was quite a prominent figure in London society in the first half of the last century. He was educated as a surgeon, and at one time was Inspector-General of Military Hospitals. After much opposition from her family, Lady Keppel became the wife of Robin, and after giving birth to three children, died of consumption. Adair lived to be nearly eighty years of age, dying in the year 1790.

**L. EVANS**—Cerberus, in Grecian mythology, was the name of a many-headed dog, who stood guard at the portals of the infernal regions, or realm of Pluto. Later writers describe him as the possessor of three heads, with a mane and tail composed of serpents; but many poets, taking advantage of the license granted them, persist in maintaining that he was burdened with one hundred heads. When any of the Greeks or Romans died, the relatives of the deceased placed a cake in his or her hand, so that upon arriving within Pluto's domain the spirit could toss it to the monster Cerberus, and thus pass by unmolested. This gave origin to the expression, "to give a sop to Cerberus," the literal signification of which is to give a bribe to quiet a troublesome or crusty customer.

**SCHOOLBOY**—To perform the seemingly impossible feat of placing an egg in a bottle, first soak the egg for several days in strong vinegar. The acid eats the lime in the shell, so that, although the egg shows no perceptible change in its outward appearance, it becomes soft and capable of compression. Select a bottle with the neck a third smaller than the egg, and then by exercising a little care no trouble will be experienced in pressing the latter into the bottle. Fill it half full of lime-water, and in the course of a few days the shell will harden and your friends who are ignorant of the manner of its introduction will puzzle their brains to understand how such a fragile object could be passed through an opening one-third smaller than the egg. The lime-water must be poured off as soon as the shell hardens in order to fully carry out the illusion.

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